ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

Selected Articles and Speeches



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* Here and elsewhere the dates given in square brackets are the dates of the events referred to in the articles.– *Ed.*

An Impassioned Opponent of War and Champion of Peace and Female Emancipation

Alexandra Mikhailovna Kollontai was a prominent member of the Communist Party and the Soviet government. From the 1920's to the 1940's she was also a well-known diplomat who made a major contribution to detente and the struggle against fascism. This remarkable woman embarked upon her long and eventful career not because of personal dissatisfaction with her position in life, nor yet because of the influence of the milieu in which she was brought up, but because she sought social justice, freedom and equality for working people throughout the world.

As a young woman she had everything she needed to lead a life of quiet contentment. She was born into a wealthy and titled family, received an excellent education, spoke several languages, was interested in literature and the arts, and associated with the elite of Russian society. However, this world with its beliefs and aspirations was alien to her, and she abandoned it. Observant, humane, sensitive and intelligent, educated in the democratic traditions of Russian progressive literature, Alexandra Kollontai reacted sharply against Russian tsarist autocracy and turned to Marxism, becoming a professional revolutionary undaunted by the difficulties and dangers that awaited her.

Alexandra Kollontai led a rich and creative life, surmounting difficulties and risking death for the revolution, rejoicing at the victory of the cause to which she had devoted herself heart and soul. All her life she worked for the triumph of socialism with outstanding dedication and enthusiasm.

After leaving her family, Kollontai spent some time abroad studying the social and economic sciences at the universities of Zurich and London. She also studied Marxism and took her first successful steps in the field of politics and literature. This period also marked the beginning of her work as a Marxist propagandist in many coun-

tries in Europe and in America, which she herself later described as one of her most important contributions to the common struggle to build a new society. The nature of this contribution can be judged in her numerous writings. Having begun propaganda work both as a public speaker and as a writer, in Russia at the close of the 19th century, she continued it to the end of her life. Her articles and books were translated into various languages and published in many countries, where they were well received by the progressive reading public.

In 1909 police surveillance compelled Alexandra Kollontai to leave her native land and to face the difficult life of an émigré travelling from one country to another – Germany, England, Denmark, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and America. Everywhere she went she continued the fierce struggle for workers' rights, and actively participated in the international socialist movement. She attended the Stuttgart, Copenhagen and Basle congresses of the Second International and two international conferences of socialist women. She was also a member of the International Women's Secretariat of the women's socialist movement and a recognised writer, propagandist and lecturer. Wherever she spoke, whether she was addressing young people at a packed meeting of St Petersburg students, or the working people of Germany, Sweden, Norway or America during her period abroad, speaking at pre-war socialist forums, talking to sailors on board the ships of the Baltic fleet during the heroic days of the October Revolution, or to citizens of the young Soviet Republic, she was an impassioned orator whose words touched the hearts of her listeners.

She herself loved the work of party propagandist. Towards the end of her life she wrote in her diary: 'The enthusiasm that "fires" the propagandist preaching and struggling for a new idea or proposition is a delicious feeling akin to being in love... I myself burned with that feeling, and the fire communicated itself to the audience. I did not preach at them, I drew them after me. I left the meeting to the thunder of applause, scarcely able to stand for weariness. I had given the audience a part of myself and I was happy.'

Alexandra Kollontai's written works are extremely varied – they include essays, fundamental research works, propaganda articles, speeches and reports delivered at congresses,

conferences and meetings, diary notes, memoirs, and letters – but, whichever we turn to, we discover the image of the author herself, a person of many and varied talents with an extraordinarily wide range of interests. This image is in perfect harmony with the age in which she lived, the stormy first half of the 20th century, filled with events of momentous historical importance.

This collection of selected works by Kollontai includes some of her articles and speeches specially chosen because they mark important stages in the life of the author and touch upon the topics that concerned her most – the struggle for peace, the struggle for the emancipation of women and of the peoples of the world, and essays about Lenin, the man and the leader of the proletariat. These three topics are closely interrelated and were constantly in the thoughts and works of the author.

The propagation of anti-war ideas was a task to which Alexandra Kollontai devoted herself with particular fervour, striving to call forth a response in all those who listened to her or read her works. As a Marxist she analysed the social causes of war in the age of imperialism and, as a member of the international proletarian movement she helped to organise the masses. First she strove to direct their struggle against the approaching First World War, then to unite their efforts in the struggle to end the war. Finally she devoted her efforts to the consolidation of an anti-fascist bloc during the Second World War.

In this present collection, the anti-war theme begins with the speech delivered by Alexandra Kollontai in Stockholm on 1 May, 1912, when the imperialist bourgeoisie was already secretly preparing a war that, in the event, would cost millions of lives. Addressing the thousands who had come to the open-air meeting in the Gardet field, Kollontai declared: 'And is this not a sign of growing solidarity that I, a foreigner from distant Russia, can stand here today and, speaking in German, which is neither my native tongue nor yours, pass on to you greetings from the Russian proletariat. The Russian proletariat, together with the proletariat of the whole world, protests against all wars. It is a well-known fact that the proletariat knows no national frontiers. It recognises only two "nations" in the civilised world: the exploiters and the exploited... And if the bourgeoisie talks of war, then we answer with the thousands of voices of the organised workers: "We do

not want war! We demand peace! Down with war! Long live the social revolution!"'*

However, the international proletariat was unable to prevent the outbreak of the First World War. As soon as it began, Alexandra Kollontai adopted an internationalist position and began to conduct anti-war propaganda. This collection includes the article 'The War and Our Immediate Tasks', which was written in November, 1914, for a Swedish socialist newspaper. Although during the first months of the war Kollontai had still not adopted Lenin's proposition on the necessity of converting imperialist war into civil war but was still advancing the mistaken pacifist call for 'peace', her article is filled with anger against the war. It accurately describes the imperialist predators, exposes the lies and hypocrisy of the governments of all the belligerent countries and attempts to define the tasks facing the working class during the war. This article was one of the reasons for Kollontai's 'permanent' expulsion from Sweden, and this royal edict was repealed only in 1930, when Alexandra Kollontai returned to Sweden, this time as a representative of the Soviet government.

During the war Alexandra Kollontai began to work directly under the leadership of Lenin and to carry out the tasks he set her. These years saw the growing solidarity of left-wing forces within the international socialist movement, and the foundations of the Third International were being laid. Kollontai helped to establish links between the party Central Committee, then abroad, with Russian Bolshevik organisations, and also propagated Lenin's propositions concerning war, peace and revolution. Her experience of work abroad, her contacts with various party workers and the fact that she had attended all the international socialist congresses proved very useful during this period. She gave her full support to Lenin's ideas and strove to see them implemented, full of admiration for a man whose 'extraordinarily powerful mind could perceive that which was hidden from us all', a man who in those years appeared to her to be 'not merely a man but the embodiment of some natural-cosmic force pushing aside the socio-economic crust that had formed over thousands of years of human history'.

Having become a member of the Bolshevik Party, Alex-

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* *Selected Articles and Speeches*, p. 106 (the Russian text is a translation from the Swedish).

andra Kollontai fought against social-chauvinism and reformism in the ranks of the proletarian movement. In 1915 she wrote the article 'Why Was the German Proletariat Silent in the July Days?' for the Leninist magazine *Kommunist*, which was published in Switzerland just before the Zimmerwald Conference of internationalists. In this article she analysed the reasons for the metamorphosis of the leaders of German Social-Democracy, who during the war had blindly served their imperialist government and given their wholehearted support to its expansionist politics. The conclusion drawn by the author is still relevant today: 'This lesson will not go unheeded by the proletariat of the world. This bloody age, this age that reveals all the ills hidden within individual, socialist parties, clearly shows that the theory of "adaptation" by the workers' movement to the capitalist system in its own country, the theory of "peaceful struggle" for class supremacy, is one of the greatest dangers facing the international, revolutionary-class liberation movement.'

Particularly interesting is the pamphlet *Who Needs the War?* written in Norway in 1915 and carefully edited by Lenin, who was then in Switzerland. (This pamphlet was republished several times abroad and in Russia, a new edition appearing as late as 1917.) It was written for a wide public (mainly servicemen) and reveals clearly and precisely the nature of war, who benefits from it, and what the proletariat and its party must do to put an end to it. Having raised the question of what is to be done in the existing situation, the author writes that there can be only one and the same answer for the workers of every country: 'Governments may set brother upon brother, a worker from one country against a fellow worker from another country, but the enemy remains *one and the same for all workers throughout the world*, the interests of the Russian and the German, the English and the Austrian workers are one and the same. In order to achieve peace the first thing to be done is to bring the *culprits* to book... Let them answer for their deeds! Away with the worthless governments, the patrons of the wealthy moneybags!... *State power should belong to the people!*'

Events in Russia showed that the Bolshevik Party had chosen the correct tactics. In her article 'Our Memorial to the Fighters for Freedom', written immediately following

the February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917, Kollontai wrote: 'Today, when we are burying not only those who died for freedom, but also tsarist autocracy, revolutionary socialists, those who adhered resolutely to the decisions taken by international workers' congresses, can also celebrate their victory. Their tactic, their strategy of work and struggle, has emerged triumphant. Not the slogan of "class peace" during the predatory, expansionist war among the capitalist states, but the slogan of class war, of civil war, that was defended and implemented with such heavy losses by the left wing of Russian Social-Democracy, has brought Russia to the great revolution and given Russian democracy the victory over the "internal enemy".'

From then on, when Soviet power was proclaimed and when the Decree on Peace was adopted at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets in 1917, during the years of civil war and foreign intervention (1918–1921) when the young Soviet Republic defended the gains of the October Revolution, and in the years that followed, when she was serving as a diplomat, Alexandra Kollontai faithfully supported the policy of peaceful coexistence and international detente implemented by the worker and peasant state.

Alexandra Kollontai is also well known throughout the world as one who defended the interests of women workers, and contributed to the theoretical analysis of the 'women's question'. She was a leading figure in the international women's movement, and all her life she remained faithful to her 'great passion'–concern for the fate of working women. 'My most important achievement,' she wrote later in life, 'was, of course, my contribution to the struggle for the emancipation of working women and for equal rights for women in every sphere of work, political life, science, etc. Moreover, I always linked the struggle for emancipation and equal rights with the double vocation of women–that of citizen and that of mother.'

She devoted a great deal of time and effort to the development of the revolutionary women's movement, in which she occupied a prominent position. During the first Russian revolution in 1905 and in the years that followed she became a well-known figure among working women in Russia and beyond. When talking with these women, addressing meetings, attending various conferences and discussing the problems facing the women's movement, she

always tried to draw as many women as possible into the proletarian movement and the struggle to achieve equality, emancipation and freedom. Her articles published in the socialist press on the situation of working women were filled with revolutionary zeal. On this topic alone her writings would comprise several volumes.

The present collection includes the introduction to Kollontai's first basic theoretical work entitled *The Social Basis of the Women's Question*, which was written for the All-Russia Women's Congress (1908). The manuscript received the approval of Maxim Gorky, then living on the island of Capri in Italy. In this work Kollontai emerges as a theoretician of the women's revolutionary movement. At the time it was only the second book, following the publication in 1901 of the pamphlet entitled *The Woman Worker* by Sablina (the pseudonym of Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya), to examine this issue from a Marxist position. Written in a lively and imaginative style and with an acutely polemic content, this book was accorded a sympathetic reception within the workers' movement and helped the Bolshevik Party to counter bourgeois influence on working women. A condensed version of this well-documented account of the history of the women's movement in Russia from the end of the 19th century up to the 1905 revolution is contained in Kollontai's pamphlet *On the History of the Movement of Women Workers in Russia*. Also included in this collection are her articles and notes on the women's international socialist conferences held in Stuttgart (1907) and Copenhagen (1910), where she spoke on behalf of Russia's women socialists and fired all present, as one Danish newspaper reported, 'with her moving pathos, boundless energy and inexhaustible passion'. These will enable the reader to appreciate the range of Kollontai's international work among women prior to the October Revolution.

'The fate of women has interested me all my life, and it was this that drew me to socialism.' This explains why, in 1913, she willingly acceded to a request by the Social-Democratic faction within the Third State Duma to prepare the section on maternity benefits to be included in draft legislation on worker insurance. She then went to London, to the British Museum, where she spent several years carefully studying a vast quantity of documentary material on the position of mother and child in various

countries around the world. The result was not only a section on maternity benefits to be incorporated in draft legislation, but a separate work of over 600 pages entitled *Society and Motherhood*. This work was finished in 1915 and published in 1916, during the first world imperialist war. The preface to this book provides a general outline of its content and has been included in this collection. In it the author presents the question of maternity and childhood as a major social problem, and demonstrates the need for state intervention in the form of urgent measures to protect and provide for mother and child. As a socialist, Kollontai also concludes that the parliamentary struggle to defend mother and child via legislation is insufficient: what is required is a fundamental change in social conditions. The question of mother and child is inseparable from the struggle for socialism. This conclusion is given particular emphasis in the second edition, published after 1917.

Immediately following the victory of the October Revolution, Alexandra Kollontai became a member of the Soviet government and took an active part in the work to lay the foundations of the first socialist state, giving particular attention to the practical solution of the women's question, the implementation of the principles of equal and full rights for women as proclaimed by the Soviet state, and the inclusion of women in socialist construction and state management. As People's Commissar for Social Security, Alexandra Kollontai worked to ensure the practical application of the Marxist principles of protection for mother and child, and the provision of health services and old-age pensions for working women. She also supported the demand that women be given equal social status with men in everyday life, 'For only then,' she wrote, 'will women's creative potential be able to develop to the full and women be able to make their new contribution to the arts, science and the state.'

The books and articles written by Alexandra Kollontai, as well as her numerous speeches, illustrate the enormous work done by the party and the Soviet state to draw women into the great task of building communist society, and some of these articles have been included in the present collection.

Great enthusiasm and love for her comrades-in-arms marks the essay entitled *Women Fighters in the Days of*

the Great October Revolution, in which Kollontai names and describes some of her closest colleagues and friends – Nadezhda Krupskaya, Yelena Stassova, Klavdia Nikolayeva, Konkordia Samoilova, Inessa Armand, Varvara Yakovleva, Anna and Maria Ulyanova (Lenin's sisters), Vera Slutskaya, Yevgenia Bosh and others. 'The heroines of the October Revolution,' she writes, 'were a whole army, and although their names may be forgotten, their selflessness lives on in the very victory of that revolution, in all the gains and achievements now enjoyed by working women in the Soviet Union.'

The pamphlet *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia*, reproduced here in abbreviated form, tells of the enormous role played by women in defending the gains of the first workers' republic against the internal and external enemies of the proletarian state. The author bows her head in recognition of the nameless heroines who gave their lives in the struggle for a new life for the working people: 'Some day the historian will write about the deeds of these nameless heroines of the revolution who died at the front, were shot by the Whites and bore the countless deprivations of the first years following the revolution, but who continued to bear aloft the Red Banner of Soviet power and communism.'

During the period that saw the formation and construction of the new society, Alexandra Kollontai also spoke frequently on such issues as the family, love and the new morality. As a person of inquiring mind, she was also liable to error, and some of her views provoked noisy debate and sharp criticism. In speaking of the importance of love and of the recognition of human personality and dignity in women, she sought to arouse in women contempt for marriages based not on reciprocal love, but on material calculation. She strove to discover what the future of the family would be in communist society. Her ideal was the family based on mutual love and respect, whatever form it took, and it was this last that made the author liable to accusations of supporting 'free love'. Later Kollontai wrote that her contemporaries had misunderstood her position as regards relations between the two sexes. In a conversation with the Norwegian poet and dramatist Nordhal Grieg in 1936, she clearly stated that 'free love' had never, in her use of the term, implied immorality, promiscuity or loose living. Like all communists,

Kollontai was convinced that corruption and perversion would be removed from relations between the sexes as communist morality became the norm of human behaviour. She herself gave a very modest assessment of her literary contribution to the issues of the family and private life (the book *Love and the Industrious Bees*, and others), and later admitted that much of what she had written was soon outdated.

Also included in this collection are two articles dealing with the women's movement–'What Has the October Revolution Done for Women in the West?' (written in 1927 to mark the tenth anniversary of the socialist revolution), and 'The Soviet Woman–A Full and Equal Citizen of Her Country' (published at the end of the Second World War). The following, written in 1946, still holds true today: 'The struggle for democracy and lasting peace, the struggle against reaction and fascism, is still the main task facing us today. Attempts to divert women away from this fundamental and important task and to confine them to "exclusively female", feminist organisations can only weaken the women's democratic movement. Only the victory of democracy can ensure women equal rights... We must be on guard against the tactics of reactionaries and expose their plans and designs, their attempts to divide the ranks of the democratic movement. The unity of all democratic forces is our most reliable weapon in the struggle against reaction, in support of freedom and peace throughout the world.'

The logic of the historical process and the logic of the development of the author's own personality served to bring together in the life and works of Alexandra Kollontai two causes which she considered to be of supreme importance–concern for the fate of working women, and the struggle as a member of the Communist Party for peace, democracy and social progress.

Alexandra Kollontai also made a significant contribution to Leninology. Her meetings and conversations with Lenin, their work together over a period of ten years, were unforgettable landmarks in the life of this woman revolutionary. The correspondence between Lenin and Kollontai has been preserved to this day, and there are also the remarks recorded in her diaries, and her personal reminiscences about him. Towards the end of her life, which she devoted entirely to writing, she began a book on Lenin

which includes an account of her meetings with him. The present collection includes 'A Giant Mind, A Giant Will' (about the First World War), 'Lenin at Smolny' (about the October Revolution), 'Lenin and the First Congress of Women Workers' and 'Lenin Thought of Both Great and Small'. In vivid and expressive language imbued with love and respect, Alexandra Kollontai describes the leader of the first proletarian state, a man who, although occupied with important affairs of state, remained simple and modest, concerned for people and their problems, both great and small, and who was always an attentive and sensitive colleague.

Another important aspect of Kollontai's public life, and one which she herself described as her third contribution to Soviet politics, was her work as a Soviet diplomat. During her twenty-five years of diplomatic service she carried through a number of important missions entrusted to her by the Soviet government. Alexandra Kollontai was the world's first woman ambassador. From 1922 to 1945 she represented the Soviet state in Norway, Mexico and Sweden, and was also a member of the Soviet delegation to the League of Nations, where she sat on various commissions. Energy, purpose, and the consistent implementation of the principles of Leninist foreign policy characterised her diplomatic career. For her services in this field, particularly during the Second World War, she was awarded the Order of Lenin and twice awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. She also received awards from the governments of Norway and Mexico.

Such was the contribution made by Alexandra Kollontai to the creation and development of the new social system. A remarkable woman revolutionary, orator, diplomat and writer, she was also a loving mother, a charming and warm-hearted person, full of kindness and affection.

The writings of Alexandra Kollontai are now available in many languages and include re-editions of monographs prepared for publication in the Soviet Union. Thus the author's prediction is coming true: 'One or two generations from now,' she wrote in one of her letters, 'we will be studied as people who lived through an important period of history ... and bibliophiles, lovers of history and bibliographic rarities will have on their shelves copies of our writings.'

I. Dazhina

Introduction to the Book The Social Basis of the Women's Question.[1]

1908

The women's movement in Russia is passing through a decisive moment in its history: in December 1908 it will be reviewing the creative activity carried out by women's organisations over the last few years, and at the All-Russia Women's Congress it must decide upon the 'course of action' to be followed by feminists[2] in the coming years of struggle for women's emancipation. Complex socio-political problems, which until recently still belonged to the realm of abstract 'thorny' issues, are now, as a result of the events that have taken place in Russia, becoming urgent issues demanding energetic practical involvement and solution. These problems include the so-called women's question. With each passing day a growing number of women are drawn into the search for an answer to three disturbing questions: Which way shall we go? What should we do? How can we make sure that the female section of the population of Russia also receives the fruit of the long, stubborn and agonisingly difficult struggle for a new political structure in our homeland?

The Alliance for Equality, together with the section on women's voting rights of the Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society,[3] have decided to convene the First All-Russia Women's Congress[4] in order to give a comprehensive answer to these three questions.

The programme of the forthcoming women's congress is extremely broad: in the first section it is proposed to undertake an evaluation of women's activity in various professions in Russia; in the second section it is proposed to examine the economic position of women and investigate the conditions of work in trade and industry and in the domestic services, and also to look at the question of the protection of female labour, etc.; a special subsection will be set up to discuss questions relating to the family, marriage and prostitution; the work of the third section

will include the present civil and political position of women and measures to be taken in the struggle for women's equality in these areas; finally, section four will study questions related to women's education.

One cannot but welcome this broadened programme of the All-Russia Women's Congress, particularly when one compares it with the draft programme published in the magazine *Soyuz zhenshchin* (The Women's Alliance) No. 3, 1907. This draft programme totally omitted such an important question as the economic position of women in connection with the legal protection of female labour. Was this merely an oversight, an accident? If it was indeed simply an oversight, then it was a characteristic oversight; to forget about the economic aspect of the women's question, about the situation of working women and the protection of female labour, is the kind of 'accident' that would immediately determine the nature of the forthcoming congress and would make the participation of those sections of the female population for whom the women's question is intimately and inextricably bound up with the overall labour issues of our day both impossible and futile. Now this oversight has been corrected; the second section will be given over entirely to the question of female labour and the economic position of women. Therefore it would not have been worthwhile pausing to comment on such a minor incident had it not been typical of our bourgeois 'suffragettes'.

With the caution typical of bourgeois feminists, the organisers of the congress hesitated for a long time: what should the nature of the congress be? The omission from the draft programme of the point dealing with the economic position of women is, in our opinion, closely connected with these hesitations. At one of the meetings on the forthcoming congress, individuals with considerable influence in the feminist world insisted that the congress should not become involved in 'propaganda work' but should concentrate on concrete issues such as the fight against alcoholism. Thus until quite recently the organisers of the congress still did not know whether it ought to assume the nature of a benevolent 'ladies' conference concerned with moral and charitable activities, or whether an attempt should be made to break through women's indifference to their own fate and draw them into the ranks of those fighting for women's emancipation. However,

under the influence of the more clear-thinking supporters of equal rights, the second tendency gradually won the upper hand. The slogan chosen for the forthcoming congress is the traditional feminist rallying cry: the union of all women in the struggle for purely female rights and interests.

The congress has served as a spur to feminist organisations. The female ant-hill has stirred. One after the other such feminists as Pokrovskaya, Kalmanovich, Shchepkina, Vakhtina and others delivered speeches and lectures whose content could be summed up in the same women's rallying call: 'Women from all classes of the population, unite!'

However tempting this 'peaceful' slogan may sound, however much it may appear to promise to the 'poor younger sister' of the bourgeois woman–the working woman–it is precisely this slogan so beloved of the feminists that compels us to pause and examine in greater detail the forthcoming women's congress, and to subject its objectives and fundamental aspirations to a careful appraisal from the point of view of the interests of working-class women.

In concrete terms, the question is whether working-class women should respond to the call of the feminists and participate actively and directly in the struggle for women's equality, or whether, faithful to the traditions of their class, they should go their own way and fight using other means in order to free not only women but all mankind from the oppression and enslavement of contemporary capitalist forms of social life.

Before going on to answer this question, however, I believe it necessary to state the basic propositions that serve as the starting point for the arguments I am about to present.

Leaving our right honourable friends, the bourgeois scholars, to examine more closely the question of the superiority of one sex over the other, or to weigh the brain and calculate the intellectual make-up of men and women, the supporters of historical materialism fully recognise the naturally existing differences between the sexes and demand only one thing, namely that each individual, man or woman, be given the real possibility of achieving the freest and fullest self-determination, that the widest possible opportunities be provided for the development and application of all natural talents. At the same time, the supporters of historical materialism deny the existence of

specifically female issues apart from the overall social issue of our day. Certain economic factors once led to the subordinate position of women, with her natural characteristics playing a purely *secondary* role. Only the total disappearance of those (economic) factors, only the evolution of those economic forms that once caused the enslavement of women, can effect a radical change in their social position. In other words, women can only become truly free and equal in a world that has been transformed and based on new social and economic principles.

This assertion, however, does not rule out the possibility of a partial improvement in the life of women within the framework of the existing system, although a truly radical solution of the labour problem is possible only with the complete restructuring of existing production relations. Nonetheless, such a view of the situation should not act as a brake upon reform work aimed at satisfying the immediate interests of the proletariat. On the contrary, each new gain by the working class is a rung in the ladder leading mankind to the kingdom of freedom and social equality; each new right won by women brings them closer to their goal–total emancipation.

One further comment: in discussing the question of women's emancipation, one must, as with any other socio-political question, base oneself firmly upon the actually existing relationships. Everything that pertains to the realm of 'moral aspirations' or other ideological structures we willingly leave at the disposal of bourgeois liberalism. For us, the emancipation of women is not a dream, nor even a principle, but a concrete reality, a fact coming into being with every day that passes. Step by step, modern economic relations and the entire future course of development of the productive forces are assisting and will continue to assist the liberation of women from centuries of oppression and enslavement. One need only look around to see that this is so. Everywhere, in almost every sphere of production, women are now working alongside men. In England, France, Germany, Italy and Austria, of the 81 million individuals employed in manufacture, 27 million are women.* The number of women leading an

* Cf. T. Schlesinger-Eckstein, *Women at the Beginning of the 20th Century*, p. 38 – in Russian. (The footnotes to this article are all those of Kollontai.).

independent existence and their proportional relationship to the total female population in civilised countries is shown in the following table; according to the most recent national censuses, the percentage of the male and female population living on its own earnings was as follows:*

Country	*Women*	*Men*
Austria	47%	63%
Italy	40%	66%
Switzerland	29%	61%
France	27%	58%
Great Britain and Ireland	27%	62%
Belgium	26%	60%
Germany	25%	61%
United States	13%	59%
Russia	10%	43%

On turning from proportional evaluation to absolute figures we discover that, although the number of women in Russia who live on their own earnings is lower than in other countries, that number is nonetheless fairly large. According to the last census, of the 63 million female population in Russia, more than six million live on their own earnings; in the cities two out of eight million (i.e. 25 per cent) earn their own living; in rural areas four million of the total 55 million female population are independent. If one considers the total gainfully employed population in Russia (i.e. the population living on its own earnings) then of the 33 million gainfully employed individuals, 27 million are men and six million women...

In Russia, female labour is particularly widespread in the textile industry, in every branch of which female labour predominates over male...** In addition to the textile industry, female industrial labour in Russia is also widely used in such branches of industry as food processing, and in particular bakeries–4,391 women and 8,868 men; in the chemical industry, in particular cosmetics–4,074 women and 4,508 men; in the glass industry–about 5 thousand women; in the china industry–about 4 thousand; in the tile and

* Cf. Prof. Y. Pirstorf, *Women's Labour and the Women's Question*, St Petersburg, 1902, p. 27 (in Russian).

** *Statistical Handbook*, Issue III, 1908 (in Russian).

brick industry about 6 thousand. Only in the metal-processing industry is the number of women small.

The figures quoted above are, in our opinion, sufficient to show that female labour is widely used in Russian industry. Moreover, it must be remembered that Russia moved to large-scale capitalist production comparatively recently, and that, as the sphere of capitalist economics expands, its industry will draw in an ever greater number of women workers.

Even now, in the bigger towns and cities of Russia that have large-scale capitalist enterprises, female labour, and in particular female proletarian labour, constitutes, taking account of female labour reserves, a fairly considerable proportion of the total work force. In St Petersburg, for example, according to the 1900 census, for every 100 men living by their own labour, there were 40 women...*

Women are most numerous among those who earn their living by proletarian labour: for every 269 thousand working men there are 74 thousand working women, and for every 40 thousand 'single' men, there are 30 thousand 'single' women. Who are these 'single' women? Naturally they constitute the most exploited section of the petty handicraft workers: seamstresses, knitters, flowergirls, etc., who work at home as supposedly independent workers for capitalist middlemen and are subjected, as a result of their isolation from each other, to the harshest enslavement by capital. There are considerably fewer women employed in the professions – 13 thousand for every 74 thousand men – while only 13 thousand women for every 31 thousand men come under the heading 'proprietor'.

The proportions within female labour of the various social groups in other countries, and the position of male and female industrial workers among those who earn their living independently, is shown in the following table.

As can be seen from this table, in Austria the number of women workers exceeds the number of men: for 4.4 million men there are more than 5 million women. In Germany, the number of women workers amounts to over half the number of men. The same is true for France

* In 1881 in St Petersburg there were 27 women living by their own labour for every 100 men; in 1890 there were 34 women, and by 1900 this figure had risen to 40. (Levikson-Lessing, *On the Employment of Women in St Petersburg According to the Censuses of 1881, 1890 and 1900*, pp. 141-147 – in Russian.)

Country	Year of Census	Total Population		Industrial Population		Including Industrial Workers	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
		In millions					
Austria	1890	11.7	12.2	7.8	6.2	4.4	5.3
Germany	1895	25.4	26.4	15.5	6.6	9.3	5.3
France	1891	18.9	19.2	11.1	5.2	5.0	3.6
England & Wales	1891	14.1	14.9	8.9	4.0	5.4	3.1
USA	1890	32.1	30.6	18.8	3.9	8.7	2.9
Total	—	102.2	103.3	62.1	25.9	32.8	20.2

and England. Only in America is this correlation somewhat less favourable to women.

...The growth in female labour naturally means a continuing growth in the role of women in national production. Already women produce about 1/3 of the total world production of goods for the world market. This constant growth of female labour arouses fear in many bourgeois economists, forcing them to see in the woman a dangerous rival to the man in the sphere of labour and to react with hostility to the expansion of female labour. Is such an attitude justified, and is the woman always merely a 'threatening' rival to the man?

The number of working women is constantly increasing, but the continuous development of the productive forces also demands a larger and larger work force. Only at certain moments of technological revolution is there either a reduction in the demand for new workers, or a replacement of one category of workers by another: women replace men only to be replaced in their turn by children and juveniles. However, each step forward in technological progress eventually causes the rate of production to intensify, and this new surge in production inevitably brings with it a new demand for workers of every category. Thus, despite temporary lulls and, at times, sharp fluctuations, the number of workers drawn into industry ultimately grows with the growth of world productive forces. The growth in the number of both categories of workers – men and women – is *absolute*, whereas the more intensive growth of female labour in comparison to male labour is only *relative*...

Viewed overall, what is happening on the labour market is not the replacement of male labour by female labour,

but rather the grouping of the labour forces of both these categories according to profession: some professions and branches of industry are employing more and more women (domestic service, the textile industry, the clothing industry), while others rely mainly on male labour (mining, the iron and steel industry, the machine industry, etc.). Moreover, there can be no doubt that the quantitative growth of female labour is also taking place thanks to a drop in child labour, and this is something that one can only welcome. With the promulgation of new laws to protect young children and raise the age at which children may be employed in industrial labour, the regrouping of the labour forces undoubtedly involves an increase in the number of women workers.

Thus the assertion that women are men's most dangerous labour rival can only be accepted with a number of reservations. Leaving aside the question of the competition existing in the professions, we will note only that in the proletarian milieu, the woman worker only constitutes a rival to the man when she is isolated, not involved in the joint proletarian struggle. The woman worker is a rival to the male, a 'threatening' rival who lowers his wages and mercilessly destroys the fruit of his successes in his organised struggle against capital, only when she is not drawn into the general class and professional movement. However, is not every *unorganised* proletarian just such a rival, whether he be a hungry village 'yokel', a 'has-been' pushed out of his profession, or simply a worker deprived of a permanent job? The woman worker has a detrimental effect upon the conditions of work insofar as she is, as yet, the less organised section of the working class. Capital readily makes use of her to counter the more conscious and united section of the working class. However, the moment she enters the ranks of the organised fighters for working-class liberation, the assertion that she – the woman worker – is the worst rival of the working man – ceases to be categorical. The organised proletariat of whichever sex loses his or her capacity for harming class comrades.

Having made these preliminary reservations and looked very briefly at some statistical examples, we will now seek the answer to the questions posed earlier. We refer those who wish to acquaint themselves more fully with the conditions of female labour, the growth of the female

work force and its significance in the economic life of the nations to special works written on this subject. Here we wish merely to stress once again the close link which undoubtedly exists between the desire for emancipation on the part of women and the trends that can be observed in the economic development of society. Keeping these trends constantly in mind will enable us to discover more easily the path that should be followed by the woman who has a broad understanding of what must be done to achieve the full and comprehensive emancipation of women.

In answer to the question, what must be done by women who wish to defend their violated rights and interests, the bourgeois ideologist hastens to reply: 'Unite with another socially weak element, organise and join together in the struggle against the male oppressors'...

Such advice has not fallen on stony ground. Over recent years we have seen feminist organisations spring up one after the other. Feminism in Russia, including feminism as we traditionally understand it, is indisputably a new phenomenon. The first feminist publication *Zhenskoye dyelo* (The Women's Cause) appeared in 1899.* For many years the desire for emancipation on the part of Russian women was limited to calls for equal educational opportunities. From the 1860s, when the women's question was first raised in Russia, up to the present, the women's movement has been nothing other than the history of the struggle to improve and expand the level of female education, and primarily higher education. In the successes obtained in this sphere the women of the bourgeois classes saw, and not without reason, one of the principal methods of extending the sphere of female professional labour, the basis of their economic independence.

With the abolition of serfdom, which radically altered both economic and social relations in Russia[5] and compelled a large section of the population to seek the means of existence, the women's question also arose in Russia. The post-reform system began to toss onto the labour

* Prior to this, starting from 1898, there existed only the annual *Zhensky kalendar* (Woman's Almanac). The magazine *Zhenskoye dyelo* (The Women's Cause) appeared for only two years and was replaced in 1904 by the feminist *Zhensky vestnik* (Woman's Herald). This was replaced in turn by the magazine *Soyuz zhenshchin* (Women's Alliance).

market not only the professional male worker, but also a hitherto unknown type of woman who, like her male colleague, was also seeking work in order to earn her daily bread. The traditional women's slogan 'freedom to work' became, when adopted by Russian women, a demand for the freedom to receive education, without which all the doors of professional employment remained closed. Naturally, having completed their higher education, women then demanded free access to state and private employment, and this demand was satisfied on the basis of purely economic considerations as private enterprise and state institutions began to realise the advantages of employing the cheaper and more amenable female work force.

The sphere of female professional labour gradually expanded, but women still continued to call for 'the freedom of education and choice of profession'. There could be no question of demanding political equality, for at that time even the men lacked political rights. As regards women's civil rights, the position of Russian women in this regard was fairly tolerable as compared with that of their Western European colleagues,* and thus there was little obvious ground here for feminist agitation.

It goes without saying that the women's movement here under discussion was distinctly bourgeois in nature: it involved only a fairly narrow circle of women, mainly from the nobility, with a few representatives of the *raznochintsy*, (the new 'middle classes').[6] No socialist ideals found expression in the demands put forward by the leading champions of female equality in Russia. It was indeed true that every year Russian industry was employing thousands more proletarian women, but it seemed that an unbridgeable gulf separated the emancipated, educated woman and the woman worker with calloused hands, and that no contact whatsoever was possible between them.

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* According to Russian legislation a woman, on attaining her majority, is considered fully competent in law: she may undertake civil actions in her own right, become the guardian even of non-relatives, be a witness, etc. The woman disposes of her own property, even if she marries, as the law recognises the independent property rights of each marriage partner. The guardianship of the husband over the wife, as is practised, for example, in France, does not exist in Russia. Only in matters of inheritance is the woman discriminated against in law as compared to the man: in the direct line of descent the daughter inherits only 1/14 of the fixed and 1/7 of the moveable property, while in the collateral line of descent the rights of the women are even fewer.

The women from these two opposing social camps were brought into contact only through philanthropic activity. From the very beginning of the women's movement in Russia – as, indeed, everywhere where women's organisations had still not arrived at self-determination – philanthropy was in the forefront.* Almost all the women's organisations in Russia over recent years have been essentially philanthropic. Women organised themselves and set up women's societies not in order to win reforms in the sphere of women's rights but in order to carry out individual acts of charity. From the Society to Supply Material Support for Women's Higher Educational Courses – the largest in terms of the scope of its activity – to the first women's club founded by the Women's Mutual Aid Society, all such societies, as their names indicate, pursued philanthropic aims.

The above is not meant to accuse Russian women of indifference towards social and political issues. Can any other country boast of such a host of truly noble and charming 'nameless heroines' who gave their strength, their youth, their very life to the struggle for the ideals of social justice and the political liberation of their country? What has history to offer that can rival the inner beauty of the 'repentant gentlewoman' of the 1870s who put aside not only her finery but also all the privileges of her 'noble birth' in order to merge with the people and repay at least part of the debt owed them by her class... And later, when, as a result of repression, any protest inevitably turned into a bitter struggle against the old order, there emerged from among the women of Russia innumerable heroines who amazed the world with their selflessness, their inner strength and their limitless dedication to the people... Following upon the 'repentant gentlewoman', with her gentleness and inner beauty, came the fearless *raznochinka*, and thereafter an endless stream of 'martyr women workers' who fought for the emancipation of their class... The list of women martyrs fighting for the ideals of social justice is constantly being replenished by the names of new victims and the future historian writing about our age will only be able to bow his head in respect before these noble examples of women-fighters and women-martyrs...

* Cf. the chapter 'Women's Societies and Their Objectives' in the book *The Women's Movement* by Kechedzhi-Shapovalova (in Russian).

However, this is not the central issue here. Here we are speaking of those women who are struggling for what is called 'female emancipation'. In this particular area, the objectives and aspirations of our first feminists were extremely narrow and limited. Philanthropy and education constituted, until recently, the sum total of the activity undertaken by women's organisations. Even the first women's congress planned for 1905 was to limit its objectives to these two areas.*

The picture changes sharply following the memorable events of January.[7] The revolutionary upsurge which swept through all sections of the population also affected the feminists, hitherto modest in their claims. Women's circles became more active, stirred into life. Bold speeches and radical demands could be heard. Declarations, resolutions and petitions were dispatched to rural and urban councils and to radical organisations, and this was followed by a series of conferences and meetings which adopted decisive political resolutions. In 1905, it seemed that there was not a corner of Russia where women were not, in one way or another, making themselves heard, reminding society of their existence and demanding that they too be granted new civil rights. The feminists, until recently so modest in their demands, became aware of the fact that the regeneration of Russia and the establishment of a new state system were the essential prerequisites of female emancipation...

The women's movement is abandoning its former, modest course and adopting a new path of social action. This, of course, did not happen without friction. Among the new members who had poured into the women's organisations two tendencies were becoming clearly distinguishable: some, more to the left, insisted upon the need to clearly define the political credo of the women's movement and gave priority to the struggle for *political* equality for women; those to the right, on the other hand, remained faithful to the old traditions, not wishing to bring 'politics' into their narrowly feminist aspirations. In April, 1905, the more left-wing elements formed the Alliance for the Equality of Women – the first women's organisation in Russia to adopt a clear political platform. Meanwhile the right-wingers con-

* 'The tasks facing the first congress of Russian women include philanthropy and education. Russian women have long been active in both these spheres, and are therefore able to speak on both issues.' (*Zhensky vestnik*, No. 1, 1905.)

tinued to group themselves around the Women's Mutual Aid Society and the *Zhensky vestnik* (Women's Herald), pursuing the idea of politically neutral feminism. The Alliance for Equality set up a broad network of branches across Russia, and as little as one year later, in May, 1906, its bureau estimated its membership at around 8,000.* The Alliance hoped to rally together women from all social classes on the basis of its vague slogans, and just as the Cadets had, in their early days, spoken in the name of the whole people, so the Alliance for Equality declared that it was voicing the needs of all Russian women.

However, the continuous growth of class self-consciousness and the inevitable differentiation among the various social strata of the population led to a further regrouping within women's social organisations also. The political bloc that fulfilled specific purposes in the heyday of the Union of Unions[8] was becoming increasingly unsatisfactory, particularly as many of the suffragettes had, as a result of their convictions, aligned themselves with certain political parties. Thus, as early as the spring of 1906 the St Petersburg branch of the Alliance split into two parts: the 'left-wing' feminists who aligned themselves, as a result of their political convictions, with the revolutionary parties, and the 'right-wing', who founded the Women's Progressive Party** similar in spirit to the Party of Peaceful Renovation,[9] almost as small in number and just as ineffectual. Both of these women's organisations marked the beginning of their activity by establishing political clubs – the first of a more or less democratic nature,*** the second still preserving its bourgeois nature, with high membership fees, etc.

The process by which women of various social strata gathered around politically and socially diverse banners took place spontaneously, regardless of the will or desires of those who struggled passionately to unite women in one,

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* Cf. *Female Equality*, Reports and Minutes, 1906 (in Russian).

** This party put out the *Zhensky vestnik* (Woman's Herald), edited by the woman physician M. I. Pokrovskaya.

*** 'A distinctive feature of the Women's Political Club was its genuinely democratic organisation, which was achieved firstly, by the fact that all meetings were open to anyone who wished to attend, and the entry charge was minimal – 2 kopecks; secondly, by the fact that every group of 25 members, organised according to *political party* or profession, could have a representative on the management committee to defend its interests.' (Cf. 'The Women's Political Club', article by M. Margulies, in *Zhensky kalendar* – Woman's Almanac – for 1907.)

universal women's organisation. The Women's Progressive Party in fact expressed the demands and requirements of the big bourgeoisie and, while continuing to argue the need to unite all women without any distinction of class and political conviction, elaborated its own political programme corresponding to the desires of that social stratum of which it was, in fact, the mouthpiece. The Alliance for Equality united women representatives of the liberal, 'Cadet-type' opposition; around it there gathered, and continue to gather, women from the middle bourgeoisie, mainly members of the intelligentsia. The Women's Political Club in St Petersburg won the approval of the more radical elements, but here also the possibility of forming a political bloc led to vagueness in its objectives and, indeed, in the very nature of the organisation.* Although they had dissociated themselves from all the more moderate women's organisations, the members of the Women's Political Club were, however, unable to define for themselves or for others whose class interests they expressed or what were their immediate objectives. Should they defend the interests of the proletarian women, of peasant women, or simply of all 'working women'? Should they pursue specific feminist goals, or operate on a general political basis? Hesitation between these basic objectives marked the whole of the shortlived activity of the Women's Political Club. When the club discussed the question of handing in to the first State Duma a petition demanding that voting rights be extended to women – a petition that had been signed mainly by women workers from the city – the members found themselves seriously embarrassed: the club was unable to make up its mind which political party was closest to it in spirit, and finally decided to send the petition to the Trudoviks.[10]

As women continued to argue the need for a women's bloc, the actual facts of life were clearly and irrefutably revealing the illusory nature of such a plan. Women's

* It must, however, be noted to its credit that the Women's Political Club attempted to organise in St Petersburg the first political clubs for women industrial workers. In the spring of 1906 there were four such clubs, among which the Vasilyeostrovsky was particularly active. It organised lectures and discussions intended to stimulate the interest of working women in the political life going on around them. Together with the other three clubs, it was closed down by the police after only six weeks, following the dissolution of the First Duma. The Women's Political Club also ceased to exist.

organisations, as men's organisations, underwent a rapid and irresistible process of differentiation. The champions of women's unity could do nothing to prevent the grouping of women into various feminist organisations distinguished by varying degrees of political radicalism as a result of the inevitable growth of class consciousness in the whole of Russian society. The age of the women's political bloc came to an end shortly after the demise of the men's liberal bloc. Yet feminists and suffragettes of every hue continue to shout about the need for women's unity, the possibility of a broad-based women's party pursuing its own specific goals...

Such a proposition would, however, only have any meaning if *not one* of the existing political parties had contained in its programme the demand for total female emancipation.

When arming themselves against the indifference, or even hostility of men towards the question of female equality, feminists turn their attention only to the representatives of every shade of bourgeois liberalism, ignoring the existence of a large political party which, on the issue of women's equality, goes further than even the most fervent suffragettes. Since the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Social-Democracy has always defended the interests of women. The *Communist Manifesto* was the first to point to the close link between the overall proletarian problem existing today and the women's question. It traced the process whereby capitalism gradually draws woman into production and makes her a co-participant in the great struggle waged by the proletariat against oppression and exploitation. Social-Democracy was the first to include in its programme the demand for equal rights for women; always and everywhere, by the spoken and written word, it demands the abolition of all limitations restricting women. It is only as a result of this pressure that other parties and governments have been compelled to introduce reforms to the benefit of the female population... In Russia also this party is not merely a theoretical defender of women's interests, but always and everywhere pursues in practice the principle of women's equality.

What, then, is preventing our suffragettes from standing beneath the protective shield of this experienced and powerful party? While the right-wing feminists are frightened by the 'extremism' of Social-Democracy, the Alliance, which went so far as to speak of Constituent Assembly,

should find the political position of the Social-Democrats perfectly to their taste. However–here lies the catch! Despite all their political radicalism, our suffragettes continue to base themselves on the aspirations of their own bourgeois class. Political liberty is now an essential prerequisite of the growth and power of the Russian bourgeoisie; without this political liberty, its economic prosperity will prove to be built on sand. Capital requires certain norms and guarantees if it is to grow and flourish; these norms can be ensured only with the participation of bourgeois representatives in the government of the country. Next comes the attainment of political rights equally important for both men and women. The demand for political equality is, for women, a necessity dictated by life itself.

The slogan 'freedom of profession' has ceased to appear all-embracing in the eyes of women; only the direct participation of women in the running of the state promises to help ensure a rise in their economic well-being. Hence the passionate desire of women from the middle bourgeoisie to finally attain access to the ballot box, hence their hostility to the present bureaucratic system...

However, our feminists, as their sisters abroad, go no further than demands for political equality. The broad horizons opened up by the doctrines of Social-Democracy are, for them, alien and incomprehensible. The feminists are striving for equality within the framework of the existing class-based society and without in any way encroaching upon its foundations; they are fighting for their female prerogatives without striving to achieve the abolition of all existing prerogatives and privileges...

We are not blaming the representatives of the bourgeois women's movement for these 'unwitting sins'; they are the inevitable consequence of their class position. Nor do we wish to minimise the importance of feminist organisations for the success of the purely bourgeois women's movement. However, we would like to caution the female proletariat against enthusiasms for narrowly feminist aims. Insofar as bourgeois women limit their activity to arousing the self-awareness of their own sisters, we can only applaud them. However, as soon as they begin to call into their ranks women workers, Social-Democrats should not, dare not, remain silent. One cannot stand by and watch this futile dissipation of the forces of the proletariat. One must then put the question directly: what benefit could

an alliance with their bourgeois 'sisters' bring the women workers, and what, on the other hand, could women workers achieve through their own class organisation?

Is a *united* women's movement possible, and in particular in a society based on class antagonisms?...

The world of women, as the world of men, has divided into two camps: one, in its aims, aspirations and interests, sides with the bourgeois classes, while the other is closely linked to the proletariat, whose aspiration to freedom also involves the solution of the women's question in all its aspects. These two groups of fighting women differ in their aims, interests and methods of struggle, even though they are both acting on the basis of the common slogan 'the emancipation of women'. Each of these militant groups unconsciously proceeds on the basis of the interests of its own class, which gives a specific class colouring to its aspirations and objectives. One individual woman may be capable of standing above the interests of her own class and of disregarding them in the name of the triumph of the aims of another class, but this is impossible for a united women's organisation reflecting all the real needs and interests of the social group that had founded it. However radical the demands of the feminists may appear, it must not be forgotten that, by virtue of their class position, the feminists cannot struggle to achieve a fundamental restructuring of the present economic-social structure of society, and that without this the emancipation of women cannot be complete.

Whereas in individual instances the immediate objectives of women of all classes coincide, the ultimate objectives determining the direction of the movement and the very tactic to be used differ sharply. For the feminists, the achievement of equal rights with men within the framework of the contemporary capitalist world is a concrete 'end in itself'*; for proletarian women equal rights is

* The very principle of equality is viewed by each group of women according to the social stratum to which it belongs. Women of the big bourgeoisie, who are coming to suffer more and more from property inequality – in Russia, for example, in the laws of inheritance – are concerned primarily to secure the removal from the civil code of those clauses inimical to women's interests. For women from the middle bourgeoisie, equality hinges on 'freedom to work'. However, both recognise the need to secure the right to have a voice in the running of the country, as without this no achievement, no reform, is secure. Hence the focal point has been shifted to the struggle for political equality.

merely a *means* to be used in the continuing struggle against the economic enslavement of the working class. For the feminists, the immediate enemy are men as such, who have arrogated to themselves all rights and privileges and left women only bondage and obligation. Each victory of the feminists means that men must concede their exclusive prerogatives in favour of the 'fair sex'. The proletarian woman, however, has a completely different attitude to her position: in her eyes men are not her enemy and oppressor but, on the contrary, first and foremost a comrade in sharing a common, joyless lot, and a loyal comrade-in-arms in the struggle for a brighter future. The same social relations enslave both the woman and her comrade; one and the same hateful bonds of capitalism oppress their will and deprive them of the happiness and pleasures of life. It is indeed true that certain specific characteristics of the present system weigh doubly upon the woman; it is also true that the conditions of hired labour sometimes transform the woman friend and worker into a menacing rival of the man. However, the working class knows who is to blame for these unfortunate conditions.

The woman worker, no less than her brother in suffering, loathes that insatiable monster with the gilded maw which falls upon man, woman and child with equal voracity in order to suck them dry and grow fat at the cost of millions of human lives... The woman worker is bound to her male comrade worker by a thousand invisible threads, whereas the aims of the bourgeois woman appear to her to be alien and incomprehensible, can bring no comfort to her suffering proletarian soul and do not offer women that bright future on which the whole of exploited humanity has fixed its hopes and aspirations... While the feminists, arguing the need for women's unity, stretch out their hands to their younger working-class sisters, these 'ungrateful creatures' glance mistrustfully at their distant and alien female comrades and gather more closely around the purely proletarian organisations that are more comprehensible to them, and nearer and dearer to their hearts.

Political rights, access to the election booth and a seat in parliament – this is the real aim of the bourgeois women's movement. But can political equality in the context of the retention of the entire capitalist-exploiter system free the working woman from that abyss of evil and suffering

which pursues and oppresses her both as a woman and as a human being?

The more aware among proletarian women realise that neither political nor juridical equality can solve the women's question in all its aspects. While women are compelled to sell their labour force and bear the yoke of capitalism, while the present exploitative system of producing new values continues to exist, they cannot become free and independent persons, wives who choose their husdands exclusively on the dictates of the heart, and mothers who can look without fear to the future of their children... The ultimate objective of the proletarian woman is the destruction of the old antagonistic class-based world and the construction of a new and better world in which the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible.

Naturally, this ultimate objective does not exclude attempts on the part of proletarian women to achieve emancipation even within the framework of the existing bourgeois order, but the realisation of such demands is constantly blocked by obstacles erected by the capitalist system itself. Women can only be truly free and equal in a world of socialised labour, harmony and justice.

The above is something the feminists cannot and do not wish to understand. It seems to them that if they can attain formal equality as recognised by the letter of the law, they will be perfectly able to make their way, even in the 'old world of oppression and enslavement, groans and tears'. And this is true, to a degree. Whereas for the majority of women workers equality of rights with men would simply mean equality in 'lack of rights', for bourgeois women it would indeed open the doors to new and hitherto unprecedented rights and privileges that until now have been available only to the male members of the bourgeoisie. However, each such success, each new prerogative attained by the bourgeois woman, only puts into her hands yet another instrument with which to oppress her younger sister, and would merely deepen the gulf dividing the women from these two opposing social camps. Their interests would clash more sharply, their aspirations become mutually exclusive.

Where, then, is this universal 'women's question'? Where is that unity of objectives and aspirations of which the feminists talk so much? A sober examination of reality

reveals that this unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists seek to convince themselves that 'the women's question is in no way a question of political party' and that 'it can be solved only with the participation of all parties and all women', the argument advanced by the radical German feminist Minna Cauer. The logic of the facts refutes this feminist reassuring self-delusion.

It would be pointless to try to convince all bourgeois women of the fact that the victory of the women's cause depends on the victory of the common proletarian cause. However, appealing to those among them who are capable of abandoning the narrow objectives of 'short-term politics', who are able to take a broader view of the destiny of all women, we insistently urge you not to summon into your ranks your proletarian sisters alien to you in spirit! Throw off the finery of idealistic phraseology in which you – the women of the bourgeois classes – so love to dress yourselves, and, arming yourselves with the sobering lessons of history, look yourselves to the defence of your own class rights and interests, leaving the working women to follow their own path, struggle by their own methods for the freedom and happiness of women. Whose path is the shorter and whose means the more certain will be shown by life itself...

A. Kollontai,
The Social Basis
of the Women's Question,
St Petersburg, 1909,
pp. 1–33,
abridged

International Socialist Conferences of Women Workers

[1907-1916]

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST WOMEN-STUTTGART, 1907

A new danger is threatening the domination of the bourgeoisie-women workers are resolutely adopting the path of international class organisation. The downtrodden, submissive slaves humbly bowing before the omnipotence of the modern Moloch of capital are, under the reviving influence of socialist doctrine, lifting their heads and raising their voices in defence of their interests as women and their common class interests.

While the 'poison of socialist doctrine' had infected only one half of the working class, while opposition was concentrated exclusively in the male section of the proletariat, the capitalists could breathe freely; they still had in their power an inexhaustible supply of compliant workers always ready obediently and selflessly to enrich by their labour the happy owners of the instruments of production. With unconscious calculation the bourgeoisie availed itself of the advantage offered by this state of affairs: it set one half of the proletariat against the other, shattered its unity, compelled the women to appear as the menacing rivals of their menfolk, sapping the class solidarity of the workers. With malicious smugness it countered the resistance of united proletarians with the indifference of the unconscious female elements, and the more ignorant and dispersed the women remained, the more unsuccessful was the struggle waged by the organised elements of the working class.

However, the class consciousness of the women workers, once aroused, was sufficient to compel them to grasp the hand of friendship held out to them by their male worker comrades and adopt the path of open and stubborn resistance. The involvement of proletarian women in the com-

mon class struggle, and their growing solidarity have shaken the usual self-confidence of the bourgeoisie and spread alarm in place of its previous tranquillity: the increasing organisation of the female proletariat removes the last defenceless victim of capitalist exploitation. The ground is disappearing from beneath the feet of the bourgeoisie, and the light of the approaching social revolution glows ever more brightly.

Is it therefore surprising that the bourgeoisie is doubly hostile to any sign of protest among women workers, and to any attempt on their part to defend their needs and interests as women and their common class interests and needs? Even in the most democratic and advanced countries everything possible is done to make it difficult for women to defend their labour interests. To grant the woman worker the same rights as the man would be to put in the hands of the working class a new and dangerous weapon, to double the active army of the militant opponent; the bourgeoisie is too intelligent to agree to such a dangerous experiment.

The whole bourgeois world listened with unconcealed animosity to the solemn and harmonious notes that rang out from Stuttgart in 1907, during the International Socialist Congress.[11] But most of all it was angered by the bold voices of the female proletariat. However radical were the speeches pronounced by the men, whatever 'mad' resolutions they might adopt, the bourgeoisie always consoled itself with the thought that it still had one tested method at its disposal: break the resistance of the 'hotheads' by replacing them with submissive female workers. And now a new surprise: from all over the world women representatives of the working class are gathering in order to forge by their united efforts a new weapon with which to fight the world hostile to the proletariat.[12] The daring of women has exceeded all expectations: yesterday's silent slave is now a courageous fighter for the liberation of the working class. Could one imagine a more vexatious spectacle! Spiteful ridicule rained down upon the heads of the women representatives of the working class, ridicule that failed to conceal the genuine anxiety of the bourgeoisie.

The gentlemen of capital and property do now indeed have something to ponder over, something to be depressed about: new successes are being achieved in the orga-

nisation of the working class. And if, until only recently, the bourgeoisie could draw comfort from the lack of unity in the female section of the proletariat, now, after the Stuttgart Conference, it has lost even this sweet solace.

On the basis of facts and figures these women representatives described the growing awareness of the female proletariat and its organisational successes, particularly in recent years. England has the largest number of organised women workers: 150 thousand are members of trade unions; 30 thousand are politically organised in 'independent workers' parties' and women workers are also members of the Social-Democratic Federation[13]. In Austria trade union organisations include 42 thousand women among their members. In Germany the number of women who are trade union members is also impressive – 120 thousand; despite all the police harassment, 10,500 women workers have joined the Social-Democratic Party, and the distribution figure for the women workers' magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality)[14] is 70 thousand copies. In Finland the Social-Democratic movement has 18,600 women. In Belgium 14 thousand women workers are trade union members. In Hungary 15 thousand women workers are in trade union organisations, etc.

The growing organisation of women workers and the specific social objectives which it is mainly their task to carry through led to an awareness of the need for greater solidarity and closer contact among the organised women workers of the world.

The first women's international conference in Stuttgart set itself two objectives: 1) to elaborate the basis for more uniform activity on the part of the socialist movement (in various countries) in the struggle to win voting rights for women workers; 2) to establish permanent and correct relations between women's organisations throughout the world.

The main question discussed at the conference was, without any doubt, the question of voting rights for women workers. Put forward for discussion by the conference and introduced into the Social-Democratic congress as a special resolution, this question is designed to meet the growing need within the female proletariat to define the future tactics of international Social-Democracy in the struggle for political rights for women workers, and to transfer this principle from the sphere of theoretical recognition to that

of practical activity. With the growth of its class consciousness and organisation, the female proletariat was brought by its basic material needs to an acute awareness of its lack of political rights, and learned to see in those rights not only a 'policy principle' but also an urgent and immediate need.

Over recent years, the working class, in one country after the other, has faced the question of achieving universal suffrage. It might have seemed that the four-part election formula advanced by the Social-Democrats and supplemented with a fifth section specifying 'without distinction of sex', would have left no room for doubts and hesitations regarding the way the party would act in such circumstances. However, it turned out, otherwise. When it came to the defence of the fifth section, not only male Social-Democrats, but even the women revealed their fundamental instability, their vacillation, and by their compromising attitude to this issue, so important to the working class, demonstrated that this fundamental principle has not yet become an integral part of Social-Democracy.

One after the other women from Belgium, Austria, Sweden, accepted the removal from the agenda of the demand for political rights for women workers and gave their support to an emasculated, abbreviated compromise formula for electoral reform. However, most characteristic of all was the fact that this opportunist policy was not condemned by consistent and steadfast supporters of socialism but, on the contrary, won their sympathy and approval and was even presented to proletarian women in other countries as a model. The working women themselves cannot be blamed for this compromise tactic – it is typical of less aware and less disciplined party elements – but the other, the male section of the proletariat, whose spirit and consciousness has been tempered in battle, should not have allowed itself to be drawn along the path of practical opportunism.

There are democratic principles which, for the sake of its own interests, the working class must not sacrifice: there are slogans which the proletariat cannot change without damaging itself, even though the change is made in order to achieve the maximum results at any given moment.

If, in some politically backward country, the working class had had the opportunity to attain universal, equal,

secret but indirect rather than direct voting rights, the position of the Social-Democrats in such a situation would have been obvious: despite the risk of stalling a reform that was otherwise certain to be adopted, the workers' party would fight to the last moment for the full formula... Perhaps the indirect electoral system would be adopted despite the opposition of the Social-Democrats, and no doubt they would have to reconcile themselves to this fact, but their attitude to it would be perfectly clear: they could view it only as a defeat.

The situation is different as regards the issue of voting rights for women workers. The demand 'without distinction of sex' has not yet become an integral part of the practice of proletarian struggle: awareness of the importance of full and equal political rights for women workers in the name of the interests of the whole class has not yet had time to take firm root. It must not be forgotten that women began to work outside the home only comparatively recently, and have only recently begun to play a role in the proletarian movement. The ideological survivals of the bourgeois-capitalist world affect the purity and clarity of proletarian class consciousness in regard to women, and blur the distinct outlines of a principle that would appear to be indisputable in the eyes of the proletariat, namely the principle of equality of civil rights for all the members of the world proletarian family.

The vacillating tactic of the party in the struggle for women's voting rights obliged the Social-Democrats to devote particular attention to this issue at the congress. The adoption of a resolution which would clearly and precisely express the willingness of the working class to fight for voting rights for women workers with the same unswerving determination with which Social-Democracy pursues all its principles–this was the slogan of the women's socialist conference, a slogan dictated by the interests of women workers. Such a resolution appeared all the more desirable in that it was fully in accord with the spirit of Social-Democracy...

The resolution on voting rights for women put forward at the women's conference and then introduced at the socialist congress was advanced with a view to demanding the clear and precise recognition of the fifth section of the election formula ('without distinction of sex') as being of equal importance with the other four.

However, the resolution met with opposition. Two trends appeared within the women's socialist movement: one orthodox, the other opportunist in the spirit of unconscious feminism. The first trend was represented by the women Social-Democrats from Germany, the second by those from Austria and some from England.

The resolution put forward by the German delegates had two objectives: in demanding that the socialist parties recognise the full extent of the importance of a practical struggle to secure the political equality of women, the resolution was also intended to draw a distinct line between bourgeois feminism and the women's proletarian movement. This struck the English socialists at their most vulnerable point. It is a well-known fact that many of them work hand-in-glove with bourgeois champions of women's rights, and in the heat of a sometimes selfless struggle in defence of women's interests, they lose sight of class distinctions.

The struggle to achieve political equality for *proletarian women* is part and parcel of the overall class struggle of the proletariat; when it becomes an independent militant aim in itself it eclipses the class objectives of women workers. The inventive bourgeoisie, who love to hide their real desires behind a screen of splendid-sounding slogans, put the world of women and its objectives in opposition to the class cause of women workers. However, as soon as the women's cause is put above the proletarian cause, as soon as women workers allow themselves to be seduced by fine-sounding phrases about the community of women's interests regardless of class divisions, they lose their living link with their own class cause and thus betray their own particular interests. Bourgeois women, according to their own assertion, are generously demanding rights for 'all women', whereas women workers are only fighting for their class interests. However, in practice the situation is precisely the reverse: in winning political rights for themselves, women workers are also opening up the way to the voting booth for women of other classes. In resolutely and consistently defending the interests of the women of its own class, Social-Democracy is putting into practice the principles of the fullest form of democracy and promoting the success of the women's cause as a whole.

Bourgeois hypocrisy also affected the English supporters of women's political equality. English women workers are prepared to support *limited, qualified* electoral rights for

women – an unforgivable and despicable betrayal of the proletarian cause. The representatives of the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society[15] did not hesitate to defend this clearly treacherous position before the whole socialist world, and only the Social-Democratic Federation, together with the proletariat of other countries, condemned such a solution to the problem and demanded electoral rights for all citizens who had reached majority, regardless of sex.

This disagreement yet again clearly demonstrated the importance for the socialists of working out a clearly defined tactical position on the question of achieving political equality for women workers. However, such a clearly defined formulation of the question was precisely what the English wanted least... Together with the Austrian delegates they demanded that each party be given the right to settle this question independently in accord with the circumstances then obtaining; they declared a single model of action compulsory for each country to be completely unnecessary. The resolution put forward by the German Social-Democrats obliged the English to do some painful thinking. It faced them with a question: are they defending the interests of their class as a whole in its difficult struggle to survive, passing through great trials today in the expectation of equally great triumphs in the future, or are they merely fighting for new privileges for those women who neither sow nor reap, but who gather into the barns?

The Austrian delegates represented the opposite extreme. Furious opponents of feminism, they were not, of course, prepared to work together with bourgeois feminists in the defence of rights for 'all women'. However, despite their sworn hostility towards feminism and its tactic of adaptation, Austrian women socialists fell into the same error as the English. In defending at the conference the position they had adopted during the recent struggle in Austria to achieve universal suffrage, they attempted to show that, in certain political conditions, it is permissible to put aside the interests of one section of the proletariat – in this case women workers – in order to achieve practical advantages for another section. Instead of a categorical demand that the principle of political equality for proletarian women be recognised on the same footing with all other democratic demands by the proletariat, the Austrians introduced

into the resolution by means of an amendment a poorly-defined wish that the *moment* and the *very method of struggle* for electoral rights for women be determined by each country at its own discretion. . .

Every time the question of party tactics becomes a matter of urgency for Social-Democracy, it has to return to the tested method of solving this question: it must once more carefully and precisely determine to what extent a given demand, a given principle is essential in order to achieve the ultimate objective of the working class. If this principle is indeed of considerable importance for the ultimate objective being pursued by the workers, then there cannot be, must not be, any room for compromise in policy even if such a compromise promises to bring immediate benefit. Indeed, what would become of the class objectives of the proletariat if Social-Democracy put away its basic policy principles every time it hoped it might thereby acquire some 'practical advantage'? And what would then distinguish its policy principles from hypocritical bourgeois diplomacy?

The principle of political equality for women is beyond dispute. Social-Democracy long ago proclaimed in theory the importance of extending voting rights to women workers. However, the tactic of 'concessions', the tactic of 'step by step' is now seeking another solution to this problem also. In place of the usual principled determination and steadfastness of Social-Democracy, it proposes 'compliance' and 'moderation'. Fortunately the proletariat is only too well aware that its 'modesty' has never reaped any reward. The tractability and compliance of the proletariat are, in the eyes of its enemy, proof positive of its 'impotence', and the more moderate, the more 'reasonable' are its demands, the more miserly are the concessions granted to it. The victory of one of the two warring sides is decided not by the compliance of one of them, but by the 'actual balance of forces'. The proletariat presses its demands waging a resolute and consistent struggle to achieve them, but it can only achieve that which corresponds to its actual influence and importance at any given moment. The more resolute is Social-Democracy's adherence to its basic principles, the further removed its tactic from concessions decided upon beforehand, the more closely will the results of its struggle correspond to the actual balance of power and forces between the warring sides.

All of the above constitutes a 'well-worn truth', but a truth that has to be repeated every time a proposed compromise tactic postpones a new victory by the proletariat and threatens to damage one of the basic tenets of Social-Democracy. If the amendment introduced by the Austrian delegates were accepted, such damage would be unavoidable. With their precautionary 'compliance' the Austrian delegates would not only postpone the extension of voting rights to proletarian women but also, and more importantly, violate one of the basic principles of socialism: preserving the unity of the working class as the major guarantee of success in the proletarian struggle.

'Naturally,' said Clara Zetkin, addressing the commission on women's voting rights at the congress, 'we are not so politically uneducated as to demand that the socialist parties of every country, in every struggle for electoral reform and in all circumstances, make the demand for voting rights for women the cornerstone, the deciding factor in their struggle. That will depend on the level of historical development in individual countries. We are criticising the tactic of abandoning *in advance*, without a struggle, the demand for voting rights for women...'[16]

This precise and consistent class policy was also defended by German Social-Democrats: Luise Zietz, Emma Ihrer, Ottilie Baader, Hilja Pärssinen, woman deputy to the Finnish Seim, Csozi from Hungary, representatives from Russia, Shaw from England and others. Those who supported this view demanded that the international congress confirm the proposition that the struggle for voting rights for women workers is not separate from the class struggle, and that any concession in this area, any deviation from principle, is a compromise that damages the whole cause of the working class.

The defenders of the opportunist tactic came mainly from among the Austrian delegates, and they received a measure of support from Viktor Adler. Lily Braun was also on their side. However, this trend did not meet support at the conference. All the arguments advanced by the Austrians to the effect that the 'obstinacy' of the Social-Democrats only served to make political gains by the proletariat more difficult to achieve, all the arguments of the representatives of Catholic countries – Belgium and France – that the influence of clericalism would allegedly increase with the involvement of women in politics and would lead

to a regrouping of parliamentary representation to the disadvantage of the working class, paled before the indisputable fact that the most impoverished, exploited section of the proletariat – women workers – are still deprived of the possibility of opposing the violation of their rights. It is to these pariahs of contemporary society, these pale, worn slaves of capitalism, that their comrades in misery, their comrades in the struggle for a brighter future, preach resignation, patience and self-denial – the clichéd, pharisaical virtues of the bourgeoisie!...

The mood of the conference was not favourable to such trends. In contrast to the usual 'respectful obedience' of women, the conference was marked by a lively, bracing atmosphere quite distinct from the somewhat dry, businesslike air of the socialist congress itself. The massive organisational structure of the congress, the presence of almost 900 delegates and the need to observe a whole series of formalities cooled the enthusiasm of the representatives of the socialist world, and only now and again was this enthusiasm able to break through to the surface and affect all those taking part. Here at the congress the most experienced 'masters of the spoken word', skilled in all the finer points of parliamentary battle, crossed verbal swords, but perhaps for this very reason many of them sounded excessively 'cautious'...

At the women's conference, on the other hand, the living pulse of bold faith and confidence beat without ceasing and one could sense that courageous rejection of and revulsion towards compromise decisions which are characteristic of organisations that are still young and have not yet become set in fixed forms. The majority of the representatives of proletarian women could not but realise what tragic consequences would follow upon the adoption of the Austrian amendment...

By a majority of 47 votes to 11, the women's socialist conference adopted the resolution put forward by the German delegation and placed it before the socialist congress.

The living spirit of proletarian self-consciousness compelled the representatives of the workers to support this resolution and confirm the principle of the common interests of both sexes, their solidarity in the struggle for political rights for the whole of the working class. This is without doubt a major event in the history of the work-

ers' movement, demonstrating yet again to the bourgeois world that, despite repeated assertions about the 'death of Marxism', the true spirit of scientific socialism is still alive and is continually inspiring the many millions who make up international Social-Democracy.

The question of the formation of an international women's socialist secretariat was second on the conference agenda. The German Social-Democrats introduced a proposal to establish closer contacts among representatives of the working class from different countries and to set up for this purpose a secretariat which would gather information on the women's proletarian movement everywhere. Although this question was purely organisational, it provoked a lively exchange of opinions, and once more revealed two heterogeneous trends within the women's section of Social-Democracy.

The proposal to form an independent women's international secretariat was put forward by the German delegates, and the Austrian delegates once again introduced an amendment. Having declared themselves opposed to separating proletarian women in any way whatsoever, they considered it unnecessary to form a separate secretariat to ensure international communication among women workers. In their opinion, comrades abroad could be kept informed on the state of the women's proletarian movement in each country by empowering a member of the party in each country to send reports on the position of women workers' organisations and on successes achieved by the movement to the central socialist organs of the other countries. This amendment vividly illustrates the constant fear on the part of the Austrians of discrediting themselves by a too clearly-marked defence of 'women's interests' which might earn them the label 'feminists'...

The German Social-Democrats, on the contrary, defended the idea that an independent grouping of *proletarian* women *within the party* has clear organisational advantages. Such an organisation would make it possible to concentrate the attention of the party on the specific needs and requirements of women workers, and would also make it easier to rally around the party the generally less aware female members of the proletarian class.

The involvement of women workers in the party is necessitated by practical and urgent considerations. Up till now women workers remain the most deprived section of

the proletarian family; they are still oppressed everywhere by 'special laws', and even in countries which have broad democratic representation women alone remain *without rights.*

With every year that passes, involvement in the political life of their country is becoming an increasingly urgent issue for the women of the working class. However, among the broad masses of the male proletariat the urgency of this demand is not as yet sufficiently recognised.

In order to defend this demand, in order to inculcate in their comrades the proper attitude to the question of equal rights for women workers in every sphere and draw them into the struggle to attain in practice equal civil rights for women, women have only one course – to unite their forces around the party. Women workers must set up a 'women's secretariat', a commission, a 'bureau' within the party, not in order to wage a separate battle for political rights and defend their own interests by themselves but in order to exert pressure on the party *from within,* in order to compel their comrades to wage their struggle in the interests of the female proletariat as well.

Thus greater party concern about the specific requirements of women workers will increase the popularity of the party among the less class-conscious female population, stimulating the flow of new forces into the army of the fighting proletariat, while the unification of women workers within the party will allow this homogeneous core, motivated by the same requirements, to defend its specific requirements and needs more resolutely within the party too. It was not only police obstacles that led in Germany to special, separate propaganda work among women: this method of work is gradually being adopted in other countries living under freer political regimes.

The need to unite women's forces within the party is, of course, felt with particular force in countries where it is only the women who remain without political rights. In those cases where the question of the struggle for the further democratisation of voting rights is to the fore, the core of class-conscious women workers can only strive to ensure a more steadfast attitude in the party towards the question of achieving voting rights for women also...

The position of proletarian women in contemporary society, and the specific needs which they experience in the field of social relations, create a practical basis for con-

ducting special work among the female proletariat. However, such a grouping of proletarian women within the party (the setting up of commissions, bureaus, sections, etc.) has, of course, nothing in common with feminism. Whereas the feminists are struggling to extend to the women of the bourgeois classes those privileges which were hitherto enjoyed only by the men, women workers are pursuing a solely proletarian, common class objective.

At the women's international conference, the victory went to the left, that is, to that section which suggested the creation of an independent international secretariat.[17] The editorial board of *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) has been elected as the central organ of the international movement of socialist women until the next international congress. There can be no doubt that both this purely organisational decision and also the congress resolution on tactics, a resolution which determines the attitude of Social-Democracy to the question of votes for women, will have a beneficial effect upon the further development of the Social-Democratic movement among women workers, and will promote the more rapid growth of the organised army of the female proletariat.

Only if they are firmly united amongst themselves and, at the same time, one with their class party in the common class struggle, can women workers cease to appear as a brake on the proletarian movement and march confidently foreward, arm in arm with their male worker comrades to the noble and cherished proletarian aim – towards a new, better and brighter future.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE IN COPENHAGEN, IN 1910

When the First International Conference of Socialist Women was held in Stuttgart in 1907 on the initiative of the German socialists, the women's socialist movement was still in its infancy everywhere except Germany. Its shape was still hazy and unclear, and the conference itself was convened not so much to review what had been already achieved as to give its 'blessing' to the movement and stimulate its further development. Stuttgart was merely a *symptom* of the awakening of broad masses of working-class women, but a symptom nonetheless significant, promising and pregnant with consequences...

Three years have passed. During this short period of time the women's proletarian movement has succeeded not only in increasing its numbers, but also in becoming social force which cannot be ignored in the process of the class struggle. Particularly rapid has been the success achieved by Germany in the organisation of the female proletariat: according to the data presented at the conference in Stuttgart, that is, in 1907 the Social-Democratic Party had only some 10 thousand women members; by 1910 it already had more than 82 thousand, and the central socialist organ for women workers *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) had a circulation of 80 thousand. Similar giant strides have been taken by Austria in the organisation of working-class women: in 1909 the party had only 7 thousand women members; in 1910 it had more than 14 thousand, the trade union movement had around 44 thousand women members and the women's worker newspaper had a circulation of 20 thousand. Finland, though small in population, was also not left behind. Here women (more than 16 thousand) accounted for some 31 per cent of the membership of the workers' party. England can boast of more than 200 thousand women trade union members. Everywhere – in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Holland, Italy, the United States – the women of the working class are awakening, attempting to create a women's socialist movement and direct it along the path boldly marked out by the energetic efforts of German women socialists.

According to the calculations made by the Swiss delegation, the numerical relationship between the male and female sections of the organised working class in various countries is as follows*:

Finland	for	1	orga-nised	wo-man	wor-ker	there	are	6	orga-nised	male	wor-kers
Denmark	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	8	»	»	»
Austria	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	10	»	»	»
England	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	11	»	»	»
Italy	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	12	»	»	»
Sweden & Norway	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	13	»	»	»
Germany	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	14	»	»	»
Switzerland	»	1	»	»	»	»	»	19	»	»	»

* *Statistical Report* to the Second International Conference of Socialist Women, 1910, p. 26.

Of course, if these figures are compared with the number of women workers on the labour market and the growing number of women earning their own living in every country, the scale of female participation in the workers' movement appears very modest – even insignificant. However, in order to assess the importance of the women's socialist movement accurately, two things must be remembered: firstly, its short history – 15-20 years ago it had never been heard of; secondly, the *prospects* opening up before it. The question of the further democratisation of the electoral system, which is now posing itself in one form or another in England and the United States, in the federal states of Germany and the Scandinavian countries, must have and will have its inevitable effect upon the further development and success of the women's proletarian movement. The women's proletarian movement has ceased to be merely a luxury and become a daily practical necessity...

The growth of the women's proletarian movement over the last three years was noticeable at the opening of the Copenhagen Conference.[18] In Stuttgart the delegates numbered 52, in Copenhagen they already numbered around 100 and represented 17 countries. This time only the French and the Belgians were absent. Socialist parties and trade unions were represented, together with clubs, societies, and unions of women workers adopting a class position.

The conference agenda included, in addition to the organisational question of establishing closer links between organised socialist women from different countries, two major issues: 1) ways and means of achieving in practice universal suffrage for women and 2) social security and protection for mother and child. Despite these seemingly specifically female topics, the conference in Copenhagen was free of that sickly-sweet 'feminine' flavour which provokes such irrepressible boredom in the practical politician who is used to the 'cut and thrust' of real political battle... The questions discussed at the conference were examined not only from the point of view of the common tasks of proletarian class policy, but were also, and inevitably, supplemented with more general demands. The fate of Finland, a country with an extremely democratic system of popular representation, the question of war, peace and the fight against militarism, the struggle against domestic manufacture and night work, compelled those taking part in the congress to move beyond the narrow framework of feminine issues and, having become

more familiar with wide-ranging, urgent issues, to join in the active struggle being waged by the many millions who compose the army of the organised working class.

However, while one cannot object to the position adopted by the conference on the issues it debated, and while, indeed, one can note with satisfaction that the 'women's worker army' is marching side by side with the whole proletarian movement, it must be stated that, in terms of the formal conduct of its conferences, the women representatives of international socialism still have something to learn from their male colleagues. The lack of familiarity with 'parliamentary practice' led to a number of omissions, which gave rise to misunderstanding and dissatisfaction: certain resolutions were not only not put to the vote, but were not even debated; debates were bunched together, questions were removed from the agenda on the decision of a questionable majority, etc. All of these errors could have been avoided with greater experience...

The main topic discussed at the conference was, of course, that of voting rights. The conflict between the left wing of the women's international, led by the German delegation, and the representatives of those English workers' organisations who work together with the suffragettes[19] and thus support the slogan of *qualified* electoral rights, was inevitable. The English produced as their 'trump card' the venerable and well-known socialist and champion of the women's cause, Charlotte Despard, whose personal attractiveness, noble bearing, grey hair and skilful, impressive speech was intended to win sympathy and soften the severity of the left-wing judgement. A 'furious battle' was expected. However, although the discussion was lively, the expected 'battle' did not take place: from the very beginning it was clear that the overwhelming majority at the conference supported the 'left', and that the English were fighting for a lost cause... The ease with which victory over the 'right' was won is explained in part by the fact that, with the exception of Despard, they did not have one good orator on their side. The English defence lacked spirit and imagination, their arguments in defence of their tactic were naive, almost 'genteel'–the 'harmony' of women's interests, complaints against the 'harshness' of class politics, against social injustice, which also affected the bourgeois woman...

The conference, sharply criticising co-operation between English socialists and the bourgeois suffragettes, adopted

a resolution which, however, failed to stress this aspect sufficiently. 'The women's socialist movement in every country rejects qualified electoral rights,' runs the resolution, 'as a falsification and as an insult to the very principle of political equality for women. The movement is fighting for the only viable and concrete expression of this principle: universal suffrage for all women who have reached their majority, without qualifications of property, tax, education or any other kind which hinder members of the working class from availing themselves of their civil rights. The women's socialist movement wages its struggle not together with the women's bourgeois movement, but in close co-operation with socialist parties, who are defending electoral rights for women as one of the basic and, in practice, one of the most essential demands in the call for the full democratisation of the electoral system.'[20] The conciliatory note sounded by the Austrian delegate, Adelheid Popp, in a speech intended to soften the harshness of this judgement found no support, and the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, with ten votes against.

On the issue of maternity insurance and protection, no serious differences emerged, and it was only a formal oversight on the part of the presidium that caused conflict with part of the English delegation, which then left the conference hall. The resolution introduced by the German delegation on this issue repeated in essence the basic demands of the Social-Democrats, as developed and supplemented at the women's conference in Mannheim[21]: the demand for an 8-hour working day, the prohibition of the use of female labour in particularly unhealthy branches of production, 16-week leave for expectant and nursing mothers, and the introduction of the principle of compulsory maternity insurance, etc. Unfortunately this fundamental question that affects directly the interests of every working woman was accorded too little time, and the debates were hurried and abbreviated. Resolutions introducing important addenda to the demands presented by the German delegation were not put forward for debate nor put to the vote, and this despite the fact that the Finnish resolution proposed by Pärssinen, Aalle and Silänpäa and other deputies to the Seim, clearly emphasised a point omitted in the German resolution – the extension of all forms of maternity protection to include both *legitimate* and *illegitimate* mothers, and a review of the laws on infanticide, committed mainly by

mothers who have been abandoned to their fate...

It should not be thought that all the measures demanded in the resolution *automatically* covered both legitimate and illegitimate mothers. It is precisely such a fuddled mode of thinking that dominates in the West, sadly even among women socialists, that preference for legalised marital cohabitation, which made it desirable to debate this fundamental point more thoroughly. It was important to emphasise with all the authority of the conference that maternity is to be recognised as a social function independently of the marital and family forms it assumes... The question of principle involved in maternity insurance and protection was, however, submerged in a number of practical details.

Mention must also be made of yet another important omission in the resolution adopted at the conference: it fails to point clearly and precisely to the principle underlying maternal insurance. Is such insurance an independent section of social insurance, or is it merely a subsection of social insurance in case of illness? The formulation of the resolution indicates that those who drew it up viewed maternity insurance as one of the functions to be carried out by hospital bursaries. If this proposition had been more clearly expressed, however, it would undoubtedly have led to an elucidation of certain other propositions which require closer examination. It would have raised the question of the grounds for extending insurance to cover that large section of the female population not gainfully employed (i.e. the wives of workers) that can still be found in many countries. Is it possible, and is it acceptable to extend insurance to them via their husbands? What is then to be done in the case of 'non-legalised' cohabitation?

A 'simplification' of this complex question in order to avoid debates of principle and heated feelings would scarcely be in the interests of the cause. Despite the adoption of the resolution, the question of maternity insurance cannot be considered as fully dealt with, and Social-Democracy will undoubtedly have to return to it.

More impassioned debate was provoked by the Danish proposal on night work. This resolution, introduced on the initiative of women type-setters, pointed out that legislation prohibiting night work for women but permitting it for men hindered the working woman in her struggle to earn her living. It is only with enormous effort that women succeed in

gaining access to better-paid jobs and better working conditions (in printing, for example), and the prohibition on night work for women pushes them back into the ranks of the unskilled workers, exposes them once more to all the temptations of prostitution and the horrors of approaching destitution. Night work must be abolished *simultaneously* for both men and women, as it is equally harmful to both...

The 'over-simplified' way in which the Danish delegates presented the question of night work meant that their resolution was unable to win support. By a majority of 13 votes to 2 (voting was by country) the resolution was rejected. An individual demand meeting the interests of only one specific profession (night work in a skilled profession is found mainly in the printing industry) could not override a demand corresponding to the interests of the class as a whole. However, the conflict this question provoked indicates the need for a serious approach to the question raised by the Danish and Swedish delegations, namely the simultaneous equalising of the conditions of male and female labour...

The resolution put forward by the chairwoman of the conference, Clara Zetkin, expressing sympathy with Finland, and another resolution put forward by the English, reminding women of their obligation to oppose chauvinism and bring up their children in a spirit of anti-militarism were both adopted without debate and were met with warm applause.[22]

The central women's international bureau remained as before in Stuttgart, and *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) was again recognised as the organ of the international socialist movement.

Whatever may have been the superficial failings, of the second international socialist conference, its work will undoubtedly have a major and beneficial influence upon the further success of the workers' movement. There is every reason to hope that the women's socialist movement, which is an integral part of the whole workers' movement, will assume larger and even more impressive dimensions before the next, the third conference. It will also clearly and irrefutably demonstrate that only special propaganda work among the female proletariat, work organised within the party on the basis of technical independence, can supplement the ranks of the organised workers with a 'second army',

the army of women workers fighting for the common workers' cause and for the comprehensive emancipation of women.

SUMMARY

What is the women's socialist movement, and what are its objectives and aims? What are the forms that it is taking? Is it not simply a branch of bourgeois feminism, its 'left wing'? And if not, how is the existence of separate women's newspapers and magazines, the convocation of meetings, congresses and conferences to be explained? Why is the movement not absorbed into the powerful current of the whole workers' movement?

These questions, which inevitably arise in connection with the women's international socialist conference in Copenhagen in August 1910, frequently cause bewilderment even among socialists, who are, unfortunately, insufficiently familiar with the history of the women's working-class movement in the West.

The history of this movement, however, is instructive and to a certain extent provides the answer to such questions.

Today there is hardly a socialist who would openly dispute the importance of the organisation of women workers and the desirability of creating a broad women's socialist movement. Socialists now take pride in the size of the 'women's army' and, when estimating the chances of success in the process of class struggle, take into account this new and rapidly increasing active force. However, there was a time, and not all that long ago – about 25 years – when such a thing as a *women's socialist movement* had never been heard of in any country, even if it had hundreds of thousands, millions, of women workers.

When, 14 years ago, during the international congress held in London in 1896, 30 women delegates (from England, Germany, America, Holland, Belgium and Poland) arranged for their own separate women's conference, only a couple of countries (Germany, England) were making their first attempts to set up a women's socialist movement. The workers' organisations in every country did, it is true, include individual women in their ranks, but, on entering the ranks of the party and taking part in the trade union struggle, the majority of these women as it was renounced in advance

their work on behalf of the most deprived and legally unprotected section of the working class – women workers. Virtually nothing was being done by the party to raise the class consciousness of working women, for the emancipation of women as housewives and mothers.

This was the situation in Germany until the beginning of the 1890s, in England and other countries until the beginning of the 20th century, and in Russia up to the revolutionary upheavals of 1905. In those countries where organisations of working women assumed primarily a professional form (for example, England and America), work was conducted in the main together with the bourgeois feminists and under their direct leadership; there was no question of a class struggle.

The first unofficial conference of women socialist delegates held in London in 1896 concerned itself mainly with an examination of the relationship between bourgeois feminism and the women's proletarian movement. It was recognised as desirable to distinguish between the women's bourgeois movement and the women's socialist movement, and emphasis was placed upon the urgent need to intensify socialist propaganda work among working women in order to involve them in the class struggle.

Eleven years have passed since then. Capitalism has continued its successful progress, developing itself to the full and subordinating to itself not only new branches of production, but also new countries. Female labour has become a major social force within the national economy. However it was precisely women workers, outside any organisation, not linked to their class comrades by any obligations, dispersed and isolated from one another, who were in effect dangerous and damaging rivals of the male section of the working class, often undermining the successes the latter had achieved by active demonstrations.

The question of organising women workers and of the ways and means of involving them in the general movement became an urgent and immediate issue. Feeling their way, adapting to the conditions in their country, the worker organisations in different countries attempted, each using its own methods, to solve this problem. The result was a variegated and motley scene. The forms taken by the women's proletarian movement varied according to local conditions. However, the most important thing was that the movement of the women of the working class had been called into being – it existed.

By 1907 the movement had assumed such a scale that it was possible to convene the first international women's conference in Stuttgart. When the representatives from the various countries revealed what they had achieved in their own countries, the results, if not impressive of themselves, held promise in terms of the possibilities opened up for the future. There now emerged the question of the formation of an international women's bureau to co-ordinate the women's socialist organisations in different countries. The bureau was set up in Stuttgart, and the magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) was recognised as the central organ of the international movement.

The conference held in Stuttgart was of decisive importance for the socialist movement. It secured for the movement that independence which it needed for the future success of its work. It became clear that the women's proletarian movement was an integral part of the whole movement of the working class. Nonetheless, the specific social and political position of women in contemporary society requires that a particular approach be adopted towards women, and puts before the party a number of special objectives. These objectives, while they form part of the whole working-class movement, while they form *part* of the common aim, nonethelss affect specifically female interests more closely and are therefore more properly pursued by the *women representatives of the working class themselves*. This point of view has now prevailed, but its elaboration nonetheless required great effort on the part of the women, and provoked a sharp conflict of opinions...

The German party was the first to conduct independent propaganda work among the female proletariat; other countries gradually followed its example. The seeds sown by the first supporters of the women's socialist movement led by Clara Zetkin are already taking root...

Over recent years efforts have been made everywhere to arouse the awareness of working-class women by drawing them into the party. Everywhere the movement is carrying out painstaking work to involve working women in the broad current of the whole movement... The reports made by different countries at the women's conference in Copenhagen is proof of this tireless activity.

How this meeting of almost 100 representatives of the working class of 17 countries differed from the usual bourgeois congresses of suffragettes!...

After two days of animated and enthusiastic work, the delegates to the second socialist women's conference left the hall of the hospitable People's House imbued with the firm belief that by the third international conference of socialist women,[23] the 'second army' of the working class in every country will be able to swell its ranks with a fresh inflow of new and active forces from among the women of the working class.

A. Kollontai,
International Socialist Conferences of Women Workers, 1918,
abridged

The International Proletariat and War

From a speech delivered in Stockholm on 1 May, 1912 [24]

Today is our great day, the day when the solidarity of the international proletariat is being expressed throughout the world by mass demonstrations. And is this not a sign of growing solidarity that I, a foreigner from distant Russia, can stand here today and, speaking in German, which is neither my native tongue nor yours, pass on to you greetings from the Russian proletariat.

The Russian proletariat, together with the proletariat of the whole world, protests against all wars. It is a well-known fact that the proletariat knows no national frontiers. It recognises only two 'nations' in the civilised world: the exploiters and the exploited.

The capitalists always say: 'We must arm ourselves because we are threatened by war!' And they point to their sacred symbols: militarism on land, militarism on the high seas, and militarism in the air. They summon the spectre of war in order to put it between themselves and the red spectre. They call for war in order to free themselves from the spectre of social revolution.

But the International answers them with one united call: 'Down with war!' The workers know that behind the threat of war there stands the capitalist state that wants to burden the people with new taxes, there stands the war industry that wants to increase its profits. We still remember the scandal that broke out a few years ago in France when the French capitalists deceived the German minister of war into placing with them a new order for military weapons. They had spread the rumour that the French Ministry of War had ordered new armaments, new cannon, new machine-guns. And the German minister of war, who did not wish to be outdone by the French, immediately placed a similar order with the French capitalists. Only later was it discovered that these rumours were pure bluff!

In France the capitalists say to the proletariat: 'Come with

us to the Sahara and occupy it. There, in the desert, you will find that which you lack at home.' And here, in Sweden, the Swedish capitalists repeat the old time-worn menace: 'Don't forget the threat from Russia – we must arm ourselves!'...

And even if tsarism, if the Russian capitalists, did indeed venture to attack Sweden, we nonetheless still exist! We, the proletariat! Did we not survive the crisis in Morocco?[25] And who was it then who impeded the threatened outbreak of war? Yes, the international proletariat, which threw out the challenge to the German and French governments, the German and French capitalists: 'Not one step further! We stand here, and if the capitalists dare to wage war, then the red spectre will turn into social revolution, and you yourselves will then be responsible!'

Yes, social revolution! May Day is an international holiday that is celebrated in every country... May Day is the preparation for social revolution, a trial mobilisation of the forces of the working class. And the workers of the world are united, they say: 'We are ready for battle!'

Social revolution is inevitable. Let the bourgeoisie, the capitalists, talk of socialism putting down roots in the existing system! Nothing of the kind can happen. How can one talk of 'putting down roots' when every year in London 200 thousand people die in slums and workhouses? Can there be any question of 'putting down roots' when in Paris 500 thousand people are permanently without work?

It is also important to take into account the significant events that have taken place over recent years, the strikes and lock-outs, and above all, the growing militancy of the proletariat! As little as ten years ago we could scarcely have imagined the events of recent years.

It all began with the Russian revolution of 1905. Unfortunately, reaction in Russia was too strong, and the revolution was suppressed. But then the red spectre moved to Sweden, and there was a general strike which, despite all the catastrophes involved, despite the poverty, signified moral victory for the Swedish proletariat. The whole International was then able for the first time to appreciate the true significance of such a mass strike.

This was followed by strikes in France and England. Never before in history had there been a strike on such a scale as that in England, where one million people walked out from work en masse in order to defend the demands of their class.

Thus we can see how the strength of the proletariat is

growing from year to year. And if the bourgeoisie talks of war, then we answer with the thousands of voices of the organised workers: 'We do not want war! We demand peace! Down with war! Long live the social revolution!'

The Russian text
is a translation
from the Swedish

Social-Demokraten,
2 May, 1912

'Women's Day' [26]

February 1913

What is 'Women's Day'? Is it really necessary? Is it not a concession to the women of the bourgeois class, to the feminists and suffragettes? Is it not harmful to the unity of the workers' movement?

Such questions can still be heard in Russia, though they are no longer heard abroad. Life itself has already supplied a clear and eloquent answer.

'Women's Day' is a link in the long, solid chain of the women's proletarian movement. The organised army of working women grows with every year. Twenty years ago the trade unions contained only small groups of working women scattered here and there among the ranks of the workers' party... Now English trade unions have over 292 thousand women members; in Germany around 200 thousand are in the trade union movement and 150 thousand in the workers' party, and in Austria there are 47 thousand in the trade unions and almost 20 thousand in the party. Everywhere – in Italy, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland – the women of the working class are organising themselves. The women's socialist army has almost a million members. A powerful force! A force that the powers of this world must reckon with when it is a question of the cost of living, maternity insurance, child labour and legislation to protect female labour.

There was a time when working men thought that they alone must bear on their shoulders the brunt of the struggle against capital, that they alone must deal with the 'old world' without the help of their womenfolk. However, as working-class women entered the ranks of those who sell their labour, forced onto the labour market by need, by the fact that husband or father is unemployed, working men became aware that to leave women behind in the ranks of the 'non-class-conscious' was to damage their cause and hold it back. The greater the number of conscious fighters, the

greater the chances of success. What level of consciousness is possessed by a woman who sits by the stove, who has no rights in society, the state or the family? She has no 'ideas' of her own! Everything is done as ordered by the father or husband...

The backwardness and lack of rights suffered by women, their subjection and indifference, are of no benefit to the working class, and indeed are directly harmful to it. But how is the woman worker to be drawn into the movement, how is she to be awoken?

Social-Democracy abroad did not find the correct solution immediately. Workers' organisations were open to women workers, but only a few entered. Why? Because the working class at first did not realise that the woman worker is the most legally and socially deprived member of that class, that she has been browbeaten, intimidated, persecuted down the centuries, and that in order to stimulate her mind and heart, a special approach is needed, words understandable to her as a woman. The workers did not immediately appreciate that in this world of lack of rights and exploitation, the woman is oppressed not only as a seller of her labour, but also as a mother, as a woman... However, when the workers' socialist party understood this, it boldly took up the defence of women on both counts as a hired worker and as a woman, a mother.

Socialists in every country began to demand special protection for female labour, insurance for mother and child, political rights for women and the defence of women's interests.

The more clearly the workers' party perceived this second objective vis-a-vis women workers, the more willingly women joined the party, the more they appreciated that the party is their true champion, that the working class is struggling also for their urgent and exclusively female needs. Working women themselves, organised and conscious, have done a great deal to elucidate this objective. Now the main burden of the work to attract more working women into the socialist movement lies with the women. The parties in every country have their own special women's committees, secretariats and bureaus. These women's committees conduct work among the still largely non-politically conscious female population, arouse the consciousness of working women and organise them. They also examine those questions and demands that affect women most closely: protection and provision for

expectant and nursing mothers, the legislative regulation of female labour, the campaign against prostitution and infant mortality, the demand for political rights for women, the improvement of housing, the campaign against the rising cost of living, etc.

Thus, as members of the party, women workers are fighting for the common class cause, while at the same time outlining and putting forward those needs and demands that most nearly affect themselves as women, housewives and mothers. The party supports these demands and fights for them... The requirements of working women are part and parcel of the common workers' cause!

On 'Women's Day' the organised women workers demonstrate against their lack of rights.

But, some will say, why this *singling out* of women workers? Why special 'Women's Days', special leaflets for working women, meetings and conferences of working-class women? Is this not, in the final analysis, a concession to the feminists and bourgeois suffragettes?

Only those who do not understand the radical difference between the movement of socialist women and bourgeois suffragettes can think this way.

What is the aim of the feminists? Their aim is to achieve the same advantages, the same power, the same rights within capitalist society as those possessed now by their husbands, fathers and brothers.

What is the aim of the women workers? Their aim is to abolish all privileges deriving from birth or wealth. For the woman worker it is a matter of indifference who is the 'master' – a man or a woman. Together with the whole of her class, she can ease her position as a worker.

Feminists demand equal rights always and everywhere. Women workers reply: we demand rights for every citizen, man and woman, but we are not prepared to forget that we are not only workers and citizens, but also mothers! And as mothers, as women who give birth to the future, we demand special concern for ourselves and our children, special protection from the state and society.

The feminists are striving to acquire political rights. However, here too our paths separate.

For bourgeois women, political rights are simply a means allowing them to make their way more conveniently and more securely in a world founded on the exploitation of the working people. For women workers, political rights are

a step along the rocky and difficult path that leads to the desired kingdom of labour.

The paths pursued by women workers and bourgeois suffragettes have long since separated. There is too great a difference between the objectives that life has put before them. There is too great a contradiction between the interests of the woman worker and the lady proprietress, between the servant and her mistress... There are not and cannot be any points of contact, conciliation or convergence between them. Therefore working men should not fear separate Women's Days, nor special conferences of women workers, nor their special press.

Every special, distinct form of work among the women of the working class is simply a means of arousing the consciousness of the woman worker and drawing her into the ranks of those fighting for a better future... Women's Days and the slow, meticulous work undertaken to arouse the self-consciousness of the woman worker are serving the cause not of the division but of the unification of the working class.

Let a joyous sense of serving the common class cause and of fighting simultaneously for their own female emancipation inspire women workers to join in the celebration of Women's Day.

Pravda, No. 40(244),
17 February, 1913,
St Petersburg

The War and Our Immediate Tasks

November 1914

When the workers' International last met in Basle in 1912[27] in order to raise its voice in protest against the threat of a world war, which might have broken out as a result of the events in the Balkans, everyone was filled with confident hope. *World war seemed impossible.*

While solidarity and the brotherhood of peoples unites the workers of every nation, while there exists that unity of objectives that marked the Basle Congress and draws together the proletariat of states both large and small, the working class has no need to fear Landsknechte and the bloody wars that accompany them. Then the old imperialist-capitalist world would not dare to provoke a war, for should war break out, the 'red spectre' would appear on the scene to terrify bourgeois society.

This was what we, socialists, believed as recently as two years ago. But now world war has become a fact, with all its horrors, suffering and barbarity. These have exceeded anything that even the most grotesque fantasy could have imagined. World war broke out at the very moment when an international congress was to be held in Vienna.[28] This congress was to discuss yet again the important question of how socialists in every country could avert war, and how the organised working class was to avoid falling into the trap of the imperialists-capitalists. Until only very recently, until the start of the war, it seemed completely impossible that the clear Marxist world outlook of the Social-Democrats could be infected with bourgeois chauvinism. One might have thought that the materialist understanding of history and the clear perception of class contradictions possessed by Social-Democrats would serve as a scientific compass guiding the workers along the correct path, even during a hurricane of chauvinism.

However, amidst all these considerations, Social-Democracy overlooked one important factor: it

underestimated the *moral influence* of the old bourgeois world on the mood of the populace. It failed to take sufficiently into account the present, well-prepared, treacherous policy being pursued by the supporters of the class interests of imperialism. It turns out that the governments of the bourgeois states understood popular psychology better than the very representatives of the democratic and working-class masses!

The national feelings artificially stimulated by the capitalists and junkers of every country in the world with the help of the church and the press, and which are also preached in the schools, at home and in society, would appear to be more deeply entrenched among the people than the internationalists realised. The imperialist-capitalist world skilfully manipulates people's national sentiments in order to drive its own national population into the ready-prepared lethal trap of war. And when irrational and blind chauvinism proved insufficient to provoke a militarist mood among the people, the authorities had recourse to other methods in order to fool the people – including the proletariat – and attract it onto its side so that it would take part in a bloody war. All the capitalist states are now assuming the disguise of an attractive idealism in order to justify their rapacious imperialist policy.

The Germans, it would seem, are raising the sword not in order to eliminate their rivals on the world market, but in order to overthrow Russian tsarism!... The English and the French, so we are told, are merely seeking to avert the threat to the world presented by the German police state and German militarism! And the Russians, if you please, are sending their sons into the battlefield not in order to satisfy their pan-Slavism, but in order to liberate Galicia and Serbia, and also in order to save the republican system in France and democracy in Belgium! Thus tsarism is fighting for republicanism, and the Junkers in Prussia are sacrificing the blood of their sons in order to 'liberate Russia from the yoke of absolutism'. This is an amusing caricature which, in other circumstances, would reduce us to laughter, but which now, amidst blood and tears, is turning into a major historical catastrophe.

People talk of 'the right of each people to self-defence'. Each state naturally tries to present itself as having begun the war in order to preserve and defend its culture, and not in order to fill the purses of the capitalists.

Culture! Yes, culture is indeed man's most precious possession. But is it not war that threatens the very existence of culture? Is it not because of war that magnificent old forests (the forests just outside Paris, for example, which constitute one of its most attractive features) are ruthlessly destroyed? Is it not war that destroys the best historical monuments and works of art? Finally, are there any 'cultural values' which are worth the cost of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of human lives?

People talk of culture, but is it not war that gives rise to the most horrific barbarity? The slaughter of the sons of the people, of the children of the proletariat, grows with every day. The human mind is incapable of grasping the sum total of all the misery, deprivation and suffering of the people. The basest, most bestial instincts rise to the surface. Militarism and the inhuman cruelty and blind discipline to which it gives birth rule the world. No one gives any thought any more to men's most valuable possession – life itself. And this is called 'defence of culture'!

What will be the outcome of this dreadful blood-letting? Will the workers derive any benefit from the war, even in the case of victory in just one country? (Even if it were possible to ensure the payment of war reparations by the defeated states whose countries lie in ruins, part of this money would immediately go into the pockets of the capitalists, while the rest would have to be used to rebuild the shattered economy. Want and misery will reign supreme everywhere after this world war, even in those countries that emerge the victors. Everywhere there will be an increase in the number of people unfit for work: invalids, the sick, the mentally deranged and orphans. Worst of all, however, war will subsequently affect to some degree or other the development of the productive forces of all the belligerent countries.

Disaster and bankruptcy, debt and unemployment will reduce the purchasing power of the people, and this will have a paralysing effect on the normal development of the forces of production. This is, for us, the heaviest blow of all: our hope for the rapid realisation of our dream concerning the future of mankind is closely bound up with the *continuing unimpeded development of all the productive forces.* Any delay in this development means that our best hopes are postponed to some unspecified date in the distant future.

However, apart from all the horrors of war and mass murder, apart from the disruption of the national economy

and the lowering of the cultural level, war has a particularly unfavourable effect upon the position of the working class and its objectives insofar as the whole of mankind will be divided (albeit for a short time) not *into classes*, according to the basic tenet of the Social-Democrats, but *into nations*. This reduces the impact of one of the most powerful weapons that the proletariat is called upon to wield, namely the *solidarity of the workers' International.*

Nonetheless, this dreadful war has already taught us a great deal. It has provided us with several painful lessons which we must fully recognise in order to benefit from them in the future.

The war has shown us that the workers' party made a great mistake in underestimating the danger of militarism and offering too weak a resistance to its influence. The principled position of the Social-Democratic parties on the question of how the workers are to behave in case of war was too ill-defined, too imprecise. The resolutions adopted by the International worked to the benefit of nationalist trends. Now, however, when German Social-Democracy has allowed itself to be fooled by the Prussian Junker state and is pursuing a mistaken tactic in support of war,[29] it has become clear that it will be the duty of the future International to state its position on this issue clearly and precisely and to determine upon a firm, clearly defined revolutionary tactic as regards the threat of war. There can be no doubt that, as soon as this dreadful war is over, all the workers' parties will have the task of mounting a campaign against militarism. This task will continue to face us for many years to come. However, the ways and means to be used by Social-Democracy to defeat the spirit of militarism will become clear only with time.

In any case we are wholly convinced that the struggle against militarism is at the same time a struggle for our ideals: all wars impede the further development of the productive forces, weaken the sense of the solidarity of the international proletariat and encourage the spread of chauvinism, and thus they delay the great day when the working class will finally be liberated. However if a systematic struggle against militarism is a task for the future, this does not mean that socialists should be passive towards war today. Today also we can and should intervene in the bloody events taking place in the world and make our voices heard in favour of the most rapid possible peace under

the slogan: 'An end to cannibalistic mass murder!' We Social-Democrats have no interest in and draw no benefit from the fact that ever more hundreds of thousands of our brothers are sacrificing their lives for the glory of their bourgeois-capitalist homelands. We need these lives in order to create that army which will fight imperialism and capitalism.

Thus our immediate task is to unite all our forces in order to achieve the quickest possible peace, and our task for the future is to wage a relentless struggle against militarism and strengthen the spirit of international solidarity among the workers. In the face of the bloodthirsty chauvinist atmosphere now reigning throughout the world, socialists from every country must redouble their efforts and confidently proclaim: 'Down with war! Down with militarism! Down with blind chauvinism! May those international forces which will bring final victory to the working class flourish and triumph!'

Försvarsnihilisten,
November, 1914

A Giant Mind, a Giant Will

[1914-1916]

There are individuals – a mere handful in the history of mankind – who, while themselves being the product of an imminent catastrophic change, leave their mark upon an entire epoch. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is one such giant mind, one such giant will...

However mighty such giants of history may be, the universal-general principle that they symbolise and embody dissolves all the narrowly individual. The ordinary measuringrod of the qualities, failings and passions characteristic of the people of that age is not applicable to them. It is not a question of the personal characteristics of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin but what he symbolises... He has gathered to himself like a magnet everything in the revolution that is expressive of will, power, ruthless destruction and constructive persistence. Everyone who values what the workers' revolution brings with it in its cleansing whirlwind cannot but value and cherish its symbol, its embodiment – Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

THE VOICE OF LENIN

The imperialist war of 1914. The Second International was unfaithful to the behests of Marx and betrayed the interests of the working class. The leading force of the Second International – German Social-Democracy – revealed its opportunist essence. It reached out its hand to its own ruling bourgeoisie and consented to total class peace.

I myself witnessed and lived through that day of shame when the German Social-Democrats renounced revolutionary class struggle. I was in the Reichstag on 4 August, 1914, and I saw with my own eyes the whole vile spectacle of the collapse of the leaders of German Social-Democracy, their vote in favour of the military budget and their promise to support the government of Bethmann-Hollweg.

The poisonous air of imperialist war had clouded minds. The hypnotic effect of compromise and opportunism even infected certain Russian political émigrés. They hurried back to Russia repentant of their political sins and ready to serve their tsarist homeland, defending the policy of Nicholas II and his minions.

I experienced horror and despair. It seemed that everything was lost. The atmosphere was so suffocating, so devoid of even a glimmer of light, that a wall seemed to have closed in around me and cut off any way forward. With the help of Liebknecht I managed to get out of Germany to Stockholm. I still believed that it was possible to revitalise the Second International in opposition to the carnage of world war, but neither I nor anyone else knew what our policy should be and on what it should be based. We were like people lost in a forest.

In that moment of total confusion and the collapse of the Second International, when the bourgeois capitalist parties were rejoicing over their victory and praising class unity, there rang out the mighty voice of Lenin. Alone against the whole world, he pitilessly analysed and laid bare the essence of imperialist war and, more importantly, clearly indicated the ways and means of transforming this war into civil war and revolution. He who desires peace must declare war against opportunism and break with compromise, with his own bourgeoisie.

A few editions of the central press organ *Sotsial-Demokrat*[30] arrived in Stockholm from Switzerland, and they contained Lenin's directive concerning the war and our tasks. This was one of the most significant moments of my life. Lenin's articles dissolved the wall against which I had been beating my head in vain. It felt as if I were emerging out of a deep, dark well into the sunlight, and could see my way forward. That way was clearly marked. All I had to do was to follow Vladimir Ilyich in the ranks of the revolutionary-working class. Only much later did we learn that the Bureau of the Central Committee in Russia was already acting in accord with Lenin's directive.

In those days it seemed to me that Lenin stood above the whole of mankind and that his extraordinarily powerful mind could perceive that which was hidden from us all. It was then that I understood his moral and spiritual fearlessness, a fearlessness that knew no bounds. The lower sank the opportunists, Kautsky and his closest associates, the larger

towered the fearless image of a man who, amidst all this bloody chaos, clearly pointed the way.

In October, 1914, I wrote my first letter to Vladimir Ilyich.[31] In the reply which I received through a Russian comrade I was ordered to start work immediately and to get in touch with those socialists in Scandinavia who would assist in carrying out Lenin's policy on the continuing struggle of the working class. From that moment onwards I worked under the direct guidance of Vladimir Ilyich.

At the same time both I and comrade Shlyapnikov were given the task of arranging permanent contact in Scandinavia between Lenin and the Bureau of the Central Committee in Russia. This contact was established and it operated until the Swedish Conservative government of Hammarskjöld decided to close down the 'Bolshevik centre'. I was arrested and imprisoned in Kungsholmen, and then expelled from Sweden.[32] With the help of Norwegian friends I was able to move to Norway, staying at a little place called Holmenkollen, just outside Oslo. From a little red house above a fjord my requests went out to Vladimir Ilyich, and here I received the pamphlets and articles I had ordered. Here in this house I opened the letters from Vladimir Ilyich, which he sent to me using my friends' addresses.[33] In this same little red house in Holmenkollen we drew up the resolution to be put forward by the Norwegian left, which supported the Zimmerwald left and was approved by Vladimir Ilyich.

When I thought about Vladimir Ilyich in those years, he seemed to me to be not merely a man but the embodiment of some natural-cosmic force pushing aside the socio-economic crust that had formed over thousands of years of human history. A plan was maturing and taking shape that would bring about a stupendous change in social relations and lead to the reconstruction of society on new principles.

The imperialist war continued, but thanks to Lenin cracks were beginning to appear in the social structure of society... The Second International had been shattered to pieces, but already fresh new forces were beginning to gather around Lenin, and when, in 1915 and 1916, Vladimir Ilyich gave me the task of drawing the best, revolutionary-minded socialist youth away from the self-besmirched Second International and grouping it around the Zimmerwald left, this task proved much easier than I thought.[34]

Twice I had to cross the Atlantic Ocean in order to rally

together, from Boston to San Francisco and from Philadelphia to Seattle, the forces necessary to struggle against the imperialist war and support the platform of the Zimmerwald left.

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Who Needs the War?[35]

1915

'HEROES'

The war had not yet ended, indeed its end was still not in sight, but the number of cripples was multiplying: the armless, the legless, the blind, the deaf, the mutilated... They had set off for the bloody world slaughter-house young, strong, healthy. Their life still lay ahead of them. Only a few months, weeks, even days later, they were brought back to the infirmaries half dead, crippled...

'Heroes,' say those who started a European war, who sent one people out against another, the worker from one country out against his fellow worker from another. At least now they have won an award! They will be able to walk around wearing their medals! People will respect them!

However, in real life things are different. The 'hero' comes home to his native village or town, and when he arrives he cannot believe his eyes: in place of 'respect' and joy he finds waiting for him fresh sufferings and disillusionment. His village has been reduced to poverty and starvation. The menfolk were dragged off to war, the livestock requisitioned... Taxes must be paid, and there is no one to do the work. The women have been run off their feet. They are haggard and starved, worn out with weeping. Cripple-heroes wander about the village, some with one medal, some with two. And the only 'respect' the hero gets is to hear his own family reproach him as a parasite who eats the bread of others. And the bread is rationed!

The 'hero' who returns to the town fares no better. He is met with 'respect', his mother weeps from both grief and joy: her darling son is still alive, her ageing mother's eyes have beheld him once again. His wife smiles... For a day or two they will fuss around him. And then...

Since when do working people have the time, the leisure, to look after an invalid? Each has his own affairs, his own worries. Moreover, times are difficult. Not a day passes but the cost of living rises. War!... The children are ailing; war is

always accompanied by epidemics, infection. The wife is trying to do a thousand things at once. She must work for herself and for the 'bread-winner'.

And the tsar's pension?

How much is that? It would hardly pay for one boot for the one leg remaining!

Officers, wounded generals, will, of course, receive their pensions 'according to rank', but who is interested in the ordinary private, the former worker, peasant or artisan? Who cares about his fate? Power in the state is not in the hands of the people, but in the hands of the landowners and industrialists, the lords and masters. The state finances are controlled not by those 'hero-soldiers' who die in hundreds of thousands and millions in the war, but by those same lords: the landowners, industrialists and state officials – the servants of the tsar.

At first, while the memory is still fresh and the cannon are still sounding at the front, the 'hero-soldiers' will be remembered. Various societies, charitable organisations and the Red Cross will come to their aid with miserly handouts... First one year passes, then another. Peace comes, and people take up once more their former daily round. What will then become of our 'heroes'?

Wounded colonels and generals will ride about in their cars; they took care of themselves during the war, hoarded up their cash, stuffed their pockets with the soldiers' rations... And the 'hero-soldiers', the maimed with their medals? What will their fate be?

Will they really have to go and join the beggars on the church porch?...

It is not a pleasant fate that awaits the hero and saviour of his fatherland, even if he wears ten medals on his breast... The tsarist government will not concern itself about him, will not give him a thought... The hearts of the landowners and industrialists, the hearts of the masters, will not grieve over the injured... What does it matter to them? It is not their brother who is suffering, wandering about the country cursing his fate... This is not a 'gentleman' but one of the 'lower orders'. And the 'lower orders' – the worker, the peasant, the artisan – were born precisely in order to serve their 'lords and masters', to shed their blood for them, and as their reward to die of hunger under some fence...

While the people themselves do not speak out on behalf of the '*heroes*', while the people themselves do not take power

into their own hands, while the people themselves do not control the state finances, the cripple-heroes will be unable to improve their lot.

WHAT WERE THEY FIGHTING FOR?

Ask any soldier, be he Russian or German, what were they fighting for? For what did they shed the blood of their brothers, the workers and peasants of their neighbouring country? For what did they cripple people? They will not tell you, they will not answer, because they themselves do not really know.

Perhaps they were fighting on behalf of the Serbs, or perhaps it was the Germans who attacked Russia. There was talk of land. At first the Russian peasant-soldiers thought: 'We're going to take the land away from the Germans.'

However, they soon realised that the war was not about land!... What was it about, then? There are very few who know, who understand. It is not only the Russians who are fighting 'in the dark' without really understanding for what they are knifing, bayoneting and crippling people. The German, English and French soldiers also have as little idea of the *real reason* for the war. Ask any one of them – each will cite you a different reason.

The German people were told: 'Russia has attacked us. Russian Cossacks are marching on Berlin. We must defend our fatherland. At the same time we will go and liberate Russia from the toils of bureaucracy, from the arbitrariness and lawlessness of the tsar's officials. We are going to die for the "liberty" of the Russian people! The Russian people themselves are weak and cannot deal with their "interal ememies", with venal ministers and the rapacious oppressor-landowners. Let's help them! We will open up for the Russian people the road to popular liberty, to rights and freedom.'

This was the seductive song that the Kaiser and his staff, the German landowners and industrialists, sang to the German people. The people did not understand; they believed. In millions of issues the capitalist newspapers spread lies about the war, governments introduced wartime censorship, did not allow one word of the truth to be printed, and threw the best friends of the working class into jail. The people were fooled, as the Russian soldiers were

fooled when they were assured that it was for 'land' that they were marching into Galicia...

In France, the government, the generals, ministers, bankers and industrialists, found another explanation of the war for their people. It was time to take back from the Germans the territory of Alsace and Lorraine, which they had conquered in 1870. 'Citizens of glorious republican France!... You live in a free country, you have won all political rights for yourselves at home... But next door, in neighbouring Germany, the people are groaning under the yoke of the Kaiser!... Let us save the German people! We will fight until we have chased the Kaiser out of Germany and have established a republic for the Germans!'

And noble France decided to 'liberate' the German people and put an end to the Kaiser.

Not a bad cause! Who needs kaisers and tsars? However, if you look a little closer you see that there is something rather odd: the people were living in peace, the Kaiser and the Tsar were friends and paid visits to each other. The capitalists of various countries worked together to set up factories and trading companies, together robbed the colonies in Asia and Africa, profited from the production of cannon and armoured vehicles. And suddenly all the tsars and all the capitalists of various countries have apparently been seized by a noble passion: let us go and 'liberate' our neighbour! Let us introduce rights and justice, equality and prosperity among our neighbours!

The Germans set off to save Russia from the toils of tsarism, and the French set out to liberate the Germans from the power of the Kaiser...

However, on looking a little closer you see that the kaisers and tsars are still safe and sound, still on their thrones with their power intact. The capitalists waxed rich thanks to the war. They 'earned' about 20-40 kopecks for every rouble's worth of supplies for the army, and these supplies are worth hundreds and thousands of millions of roubles. And hundreds of thousands and millions of those very citizens about which the 'great powers' were suddenly so concerned have strewn their own land and foreign lands with their bones. Is it the 'liberation' of a foreign people that is the cause of war? Is there anyone who still believes in such fairy tales?

Let us take another example: the English apparently only came into the war later on in order, on the one hand, to

defend Belgium, and on the other to defeat and destroy the German 'military machine' – militarism. This is how it is presented in words. But how does the English monarchy behave in fact? First of all, England loses no opportunity to seize German colonies, German land. And, of course, she does not enquire or ask the population under whose dominion they wish to remain – under German or under English. Belgium is Belgium, but meanwhile one must take for oneself other lands and peoples... What do the Germans need them for?!

The same goes for the struggle against the military machine. The English do not like the 'German militarists', curse the Prussians and express their indignation: the Germans have killed the spirit of freedom among their own people, who have become a trained, obedient herd.

The criticism is fierce. Much of it is true. The problem is that words and practice do not coincide. In practice, the English government, while cursing the 'German-Prussians', is trying to learn from them and to introduce in its own country a 'German-style militarism'. From the beginning of the war a struggle has been going on in England between the people and the government: the English government decided to introduce in England the same militarism for which it went to war against Germany, is attempting to introduce universal compulsory military service in place of the paid volunteer system which previously existed in England.

Now the English millionaires and predators have succeeded in breaking the resistance and have begun to introduce compulsory military service.

Once again it turns out not to be true; the English government decided to 'liberate' a foreign country from the evil of 'militarism', and to impose the very same evil upon its own people! However, this is not all! The example given by Germany was so much to the taste of the English government that it decided to do what other countries had done and introduce a 'military system' in manufacture: to mobilise the workers, subordinate them to the military authorities, remove from them the right to strike and defend their interests, and to bind them to the state... And this genuine 'military slavery' of the workers has been introduced not only in England but in all the belligerent countries – in France, in Germany and in Russia. Work for a pittance, put up with every kind of restriction and insult – if you don't you'll be sent to the front to face the bullets of the 'enemy'.

The English workers are putting up a bold and stubborn fight against this new injustice, against this new attack by the capitalists against the workers; they are fighting against a new form of slavery and defending their rights... However the English government is not retreating... It likes the example set by Germany, finds 'Prussian militarism' to its taste!

This is how matters stand in fact: the very reason, the very 'evil' for which war was declared against a neighbouring country is introduced and reinforced at home!...

The Germans went to 'liberate' the Russian people, and at home during the war introduced the same tsarist tyranny!... The French drew the sword in the name of 'freedom' for the Germans, and instead invented forms of oppression such as France had not known for years!...

One only has to look around more carefully to notice that these are not the reasons that caused the (European) powers to go to war with each other, that the reason why one country went to war against its neighbour is not the one put before the people. The war has other causes, other purposes, other reasons.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WAR?

There are those who say: perhaps we do not know the reasons for the war, but as for who is responsible – that is obvious! And the one who is responsible should be punished.

But who is responsible?

Ask a Russian and he will say: 'Germany! She was the first to declare war, and therefore she is the instigator.' Ask a German and he will say: 'That's not true! Lies! We Germans did not want war, we prolonged negotiations. But the Russian government was the first to declare mobilisation. That means that the instigator is Russia!' 'Not true,' shout Russia's 'allies'. 'The Russian government declared mobilisation in response to an ultimatum, to the demand sent to Serbia by the Austrian government. The instigator is Austria!'

But Austria points to Russia, with England at her back. Read any of those orange, white, red, blue, grey or yellow government books about the war, with their collections of letters, telegrams and government 'notes' (demands), and remember how, over the last few decades, the great powers now at war with each other competed with each other in

robbing China, Persia, Turkey, the lands of Africa and others, and then one thing will be clear to you: for many months, even years, before the war, the governments of all these countries were striving to outwit one another, conducted diplomatic negotiations while secretly preparing for war. They pretended to be 'bosom friends', but in fact had only one thing in view: to prove more skilful in outwitting the other – the English the Germans, the Germans the Russians, the Russians the Austrians... And at the same time each government was also deceiving its own people.

They spent years preparing for war and spent vast amounts of their nation's wealth on these preparations. What were the financial resources of the nation used for in all the capitalist countries? For schools? For hospitals? For worker insurance? For cheap housing for the poor? To improve land or roads? To meet the numerous needs of the people? Nothing of the kind!

The wealth of the nation went on military expenditure, on preparations for a bloody culmination...

The national coffers emptied – taxes increased. Any means of meeting military requirements was acceptable. Preparations for bloody conflict were made simultaneously by the German and the Russian, the English and the Belgian governments. And now they pretend to be orphans!

The people, the politically conscious working people, were well aware before the war where the national wealth was going, knew that taxes were collected so that the tsars and kaisers, the English and French capitalists, would have the wherewithal to build a navy and machine guns... The people knew that in Russia half of this money went to line the pockets of the 'builders'.

Why should we now forget who prepared the war? Why should we think that the culprits are the German workers and peasants, and not *our own useless, selfish government*? No! If we are looking for the *culprit*, then we must say directly and honestly: the governments of all the belligerent powers are equally responsible for this present war. Responsibility for the war lies with the capitalists, bankers and landowners, together with their patrons and friends the tsars, kings, kaisers and their ministers and diplomats.

They all constitute one criminal band. It is not the interests of the people that they watch over, but their own interests. War does not benefit the people, but their own pockets. They brought on this bloody disaster with their

'foreign policy'. As for the people – get out there and die!... 'Save the motherland' which they themselves betrayed, bringing on disaster. Die 'for the glory of the fatherland', forgetting all the injustices, insults and humiliations... Forget that even before the war began you understood that no good would come of government policy. Do not dare remember that only yesterday you seethed with indignation when an officer struck a private, that you cursed the people's lack of rights in their own country... Now it is war, now the country must be 'one'!... Away with the memory of humiliations and oppression, of the insolence and rapaciousness of the masters! Now it's war!... Only yesterday you would have laughed if someone had told you that the manufacturer-oppressor is your 'brother', and the German worker, as deprived as you are, is your 'worst enemy'. Only yesterday you would have given short shrift to any 'counsellor' who presumed to recommend that you sacrifice your life for a landowner, factory-owner or some wealthy boss. But today it's war, and you bayonet, stab, cripple and kill the 'enemy', a worker or peasant as ill-fated as you yourself... You sacrifice your own life and destroy that of a comrade from another country to the benefit of your common enemy – the millionaire. Such is the will of those who are truly responsible for the carnage of world war, the will of the capitalist class governments, the servants and friends of capital!

THE HOMELAND IN DANGER!

But what should one do? One cannot, after all, refuse to fight when one's country has been attacked, and when one's homeland is in danger.

Let those who were ready to die 'for the homeland' ask themselves honestly and in all conscience: what *homeland* does the worker have, what *homeland* do the dispossessed have? Do they have a homeland? If they did, would there be the yearly flow of emigrants from every country into alien lands, the dispossessed and unemployed leaving their native land, believing, hoping that, perhaps, this 'alien land' will prove a more loving step-mother than their own mother country? Would there be, in Russia itself, hundreds of thousands of hungry and penniless 'migrants'?

The general has a homeland, and so does the landowner, the merchant, the manufacturer and all those who carry a fat

wallet in their pocket. To these, the wealthy with the bulging purses, the homeland gives rights and privileges and the state authorities concern themselves about their fate.

But what does the 'motherland' give to the worker, be he Russian, German or French? The struggle for his daily bread, the struggle against poverty and lack of rights, oppression at the hands of the master, landowner and landlord, insults, grief, illness and humiliation... Not infrequently prison! In Russia penal servitude and exile... This is what the modern homeland gives to its children, to those who create its wealth with their own hands, to those who purchase its military honour with their lives...

For the poor, the motherland is not a mother but a stepmother... Nonetheless there are many who say: perhaps our mother does not indulge us, her loyal children who water her land with the sweat of our brow, but we love our land! We will defend our people from attack by foreign enemies, we will save the faith of our fathers from enemies of another creed!...

But is modern warfare, warfare among all the major European powers, a war conducted between enemies of different creeds or races? Look more closely. Who is fighting whom – Orthodox against Catholic or Catholic against Lutheran? Christians against Mohammedans? No! This war has mixed everyone together. The Orthodox Russian shoots at the Orthodox Bulgarian and the Austrian, the French Catholic kills the German Catholic, The Mohammedan helps the Christian to aim at a brother Mohammedan, Jew kills Jew and Pole kills Pole...

The war is being waged not among peoples of different faiths, not among different peoples with different customs, languages and traditions, but among *states*, among large capitalist powers. Each such power has swallowed up more than one people, taken more than one piece of land from its neighbours... How many peoples and nations you can find in Russia!

The same is true of Austria. Nor does Germany lag behind: it once seized a piece of Poland, took Holstein from the Danes and won Alsace from France. And England, the 'ruler of the waves'? How many peoples has she brought under her imperial sway – Indians and Negroes, Australians and islanders...

The big powers have drawn a 'frontier' around themselves, driven the most diverse races and peoples across that frontier

and declared: '*There* is *your* homeland! Obey our laws in peace-time, and if there is war it is your duty to die for the homeland we imposed upon you!...'

The 'great powers' who are now warring amongst themselves is each an oppressor of numerous peoples and nations. Russia oppresses Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, Finns and many others. Germany oppresses Poles, Danes, etc. England and France oppress tens and hundreds of millions in their colonies. War is being waged not in the name of freedom for the people, not in the name of one's right to one's native language, not for the survival of institutions beneficial to the working class. No, war is being waged in the name of the 'right' of the great powers to oppress as many possible alien peoples and to rob as many possible colonies. The war is being waged by predators in order to divide the spoils.

A grotesque picture emerges: on the order of the great powers, people of one nation, one language, one faith, kill and cripple each other, trample over the land... The Russian Ukrainian peasant aims his gun at the Ukrainian peasant from Austria; the worker from Russian Poland points his machine-gun at Polish workers from Germany... Forty-five years ago, Alsatians gave their lives for the glory of 'La Belle France'. Now they are defending their 'homeland' under banners that carry the German eagle... And who knows? If victory goes to the 'allies', perhaps the Alsatians will have to die in the next war for a French 'homeland'!

And if one thinks of all the soldiers that England and France have brought from their colonies – Africans, Indians... For what 'homeland' are they dying? Their homeland is thousands of miles away. But what is left of that homeland since the Europeans invaded it, since the 'great powers' subdued it with fire and sword? They have no homeland any more, and now they must die for the glory of the bourgeoisie of the nation that oppresses them.

However, it is not only the nations that have been conquered and subdued by the capitalist states who are without a homeland; so also are the 'true sons' of Russia, Germany and England if they are merely the 'offspring of common folk'. What kind of homeland is it if tens of millions are hired slaves working day and night for a handful of capitalists? What kind of homeland is it if these tens of millions of workers have nothing to lose but their chains? What kind of homeland is it when it is not the people themselves who conduct the affairs of their homeland, enact

laws, supervise the national economy and control the national budget, but a handful of masters, of wealthy exploiters?

Before defending and dying for one's country, would it not be better to first *win it* for oneself and for the people? Instead of marching out against the *external German foe*, would it not be more sensible to deal with the *internal enemy*, i.e. to expel all those tyrants and oppressors of the Russian people who have, by their dangerous and selfish policies, caused the people to be massacred? Would it not be more sensible if the German people, instead of setting out to 'liberate' Russia from 'tsarism', were to settle accounts with their own Kaiser, with their own capitalists and landowners?

Would not the French be better advised to 'purge' their native land of enemies nearer to home rather than directing their cannon against the German people?

There was a time when the workers and peasants, in defending their 'homeland', were defending their native tongue from foreign oppression, defending their freedom against fuedal lords and tsars. Now, however, the class of capitalists has gathered into its own hands all wealth and all power even in the most liberal countries, while in Russia the people are oppressed by the aristocracy – the feudal landowners together with the capitalists. The capitalists of the whole world are now united in alliances which plunder and oppress the workers in many countries.

The capitalists set the workers of one country against the workers of another country in order to strengthen their hold on workers throughout the world. The capitalists wage war in order to share out the spoils and weaken the workers by division. Thus those who speak about the present war in terms of the defence of freedom and the homeland are lying. There is only one way to defend freedom and right, to defend the cause of the working class in this war – agreement among the workers of every country and their common struggle against the capitalists in the name of a socialist society.

'IF THEY BEAT US, THINGS WILL BE EVEN WORSE'

When it is a question of profit, the capitalists of every country, every tribe and race, become look-alike 'blood brothers'. Moreover, in times of peace the workers are well

aware of this. They also know that the 'enemies' of the workers' interests, the workers' cause, are not the workers of another neighbouring country but the *capitalist bosses* on both sides of the border. Why, when the people are being summoned to the banner of the Tsar or the Kaiser, should the worker forget all that life has taught him? Why should he believe on mere say-so that the pecuniary interests of the industrialist, merchant or manufacturer who happens to be his compatriot are closer to him than the workers' cause, common both to him and to the dispossessed German and Austrian proletarian?

THE CAUSE OF THE WAR

Yet, even if war is a nasty, filthy business that no-one would defend, how can one not fight once the war has begun, once it is a reality?

Here we must first seek the answer to another question: why has the war begun? What has caused the war? What are the reasons behind it?

Wars have a variety of causes. Once people fought over territory, for the freedom of their native land. However, the present war has its own particular cause: this war was generated by *capitalism*. Capitalism is the name given to an economic system in which capital, factories and land are divided up among a comparatively small group of people in the country, while the rest possess only their workers' hands with which to feed themselves, and these they sell to the boss – the capitalist, the manufacturer, the landed proprietor.

As the capitalist economy develops in each state, capital begins to feel cramped in its own country. In order to increase profits and interest, capital requires that the market expand, requires new places, countries, colonies into which it can invest its accumulated capitals and from which the manufacturers and industrialists can obtain 'raw materials' such as metal, ore and cotton, to produce goods.

The major capitalist powers, those who are now at war with each other, all experience the same need for a world market, for colonies. Each power thinks only of how it can bring under its control the colonies and markets of other countries, either by diplomatic deception and by bribing the governments and capitalists in the weak and dependent countries, or by force of arms.

Colonies and domination of the world market are the causes of the disputes that flare up among the major modern powers. Each wishes to monopolise (i.e., to be sole master of) the market, each wishes to take all the profit for itself alone. To begin with, these powers try to resolve the dispute by 'diplomatic negotiations' in which each strives to trick or outwit the other. Even in times of peace, the negotiations conducted by the diplomats never cease. However, no information is given to the people. The dispute among the capitalist states is being conducted not on behalf of the people, but on behalf of the capitalists, and these capitalist private property owners push their states onto the path of so-called colonial or 'imperialist' policy. It is they who decide whether or not there will be war. And the people? They need to know only one thing: if you are called up – go and die!...

If the diplomats do not succeed in outwitting each other, they immediately threaten war.

Behind the diplomats there stand the cannon, and therefore there is no stable peace among the states, but only 'armed peace', that is, a period of peace during which the state intensifies its preparations for war...

Neither the workers nor the people as a whole know anything about the negotiations conducted by the diplomats. These negotiations are conducted 'in secret'. However, the capitalists, the bankers and the landowners – those on whose behalf this 'aggressive policy' is being pursued, always know how the diplomats are faring. If they begin to suspect that their own diplomats have failed to defend their financial interests, that the negotiations are working to the advantage of the capitalists of another power, they immediately raise the alarm: 'Help! The homeland is in danger! Brother workers, forget all the humiliations, forget all the past! Save our common homeland!.. Go and die for the glory of the fatherland.'

The government heeds the cry raised by the capitalists. It cannot fail to heed it, for the government itself is made up of capitalists and landowners, and the government serves them, protecting their profits and theft... In order to please the capitalists, the government begins to 'hector' its neighbour, and the negotiations being conducted by the diplomats become more 'heated'... Before you know it, war has started!...

The people, however, cannot be told the truth: we are

fighting because our manufacturers and industrialists, our bankers and merchants, want large profits; we are fighting in order to ensure our capitalists the 'right' to rob some colony or country. This would be 'awkward'. The people will not be willing to die for such a cause. So we must cry: 'The fatherland is in danger!'... Or invent some tale or other such as 'Let us free our neighbours from tsarism or kaiserism!'...

The capitalists, landowners and bankers sit in their offices, pocket the tripled profit on the sale of arms, and await the outcome of the war. Meanwhile the people fight and die, the people sacrifice their lives. And for what? To provide a better, sweeter, richer, more luxurious life for their own native exploiters, bosses, industrialists, landowners, manufacturers...

The people are too trusting! They possess so little knowledge. They have not yet understood where their own interests lie, and the capitalists and servants of the government make use of this.

Thus the cause of this war is the struggle of *national capital* on the world market. Russian capital is fighting German capital in Russia itself, and fighting Austrian capital in the Balkans; English and French capital is fighting German capital in Africa, Asia and on the markets of the smaller states. Capital clashes with capital, fights against capital, each seeking to expel the other. Each desires mastery for itself, to retain its 'monopoly', fleece the worker during the production of the goods, and the customer during the sale of the goods.

The more quickly capitalism develops, the more states are drawn into this struggle – the more bitter the struggle becomes. *War becomes unavoidable.*

It is pointless to comfort oneself with the thought that this is the war to end wars. For as long as there exist capitalist property owners who hold state power in their hands, wars will continue. The aim of these wars will be the same as the aim of the present war, namely to secure better profits for one's own industrialists and businessmen. Does such an aim deserve that blood be shed in its name? Are the workers acting wisely when for such a cause they kill a fellow worker from another country, destroy towns and devastate peaceful villages?... Have the workers come to 'love' their own exploiters, their own tyrant masters so much during the war that they are willing to die to defend their profits and interests?!

Once the true cause of war, its purpose, has been understood, another question arises: what is to be done? How can the slaughter be stopped? How can the people be spared new conflicts and disputes among the capitalists, new wars, in the future?

Before seeking the answer to these questions one must realise one thing: while capitalism continues to exist, while there is private ownership of land, factories, plants, etc., upon the earth, while citizens continue to be divided into the haves and the have-nots, into capitalists who have seized state power and hired workers without rights, while capitalists continue to fight amongst themselves on the world market for the sake of their profits, *wars are inevitable.*

Wars will only end when the power of the capitalists has been smashed, when the owner-exploiters are no longer able to harm the people and push them into bloody conflicts. War is generated by the unjust, inequitable capitalist structure of society. *In order to put an end to war, the structure of society must be changed.* In order to put an end to war, all the factories, all the plants, all the industrial enterprises must be removed from the capitalist masters: the land must be taken from the landowners, the mines from private proprietors, the banks from the capitalists, and all this wealth *must become common property.*

In order to put an end to war, a new and juster *socialist world* must be won for the people, for the working class.

When the people themselves control all national wealth, themselves manage the national economy and the national budget, themselves look to the needs and requirements of all the citizens, themselves strive to ensure the prosperity and well-being of their native land and the brotherhood of all peoples, then there will be no more wars. Then neighbouring peoples will not seek to destroy each other, then there will be no need for an 'aggressive policy': peaceful countries of free working people will always find a common language! Then there will no longer be the *chief culprits of war*–a clique of capitalists destroying millions of people so that after the war their purses will be fuller!... This is the main task facing the workers.

However, one question remains, there remains another, immediate and urgent task: how can we stop the present fratricidal war? What is to be done?

There is an answer, and, more importantly, it is *one and the same answer for the workers of every country.* That answer is as follows: governments may set brother upon brother, a worker from one country against a fellow worker from another country, but the enemy remains *one and the same for all workers throughout the world*, the interests of the Russian and the German, the English and the Austrian workers are one and the same.

In order to achieve peace, the first thing to be done is to bring *culprits* to book. And who are the culprits if not the tsars and kaisers, together with their diplomats and ministers, all the obedient servants of capital; who else but they are responsible for this bloody catastrophe?

Let them answer for their deeds!

Away with this worthless government, the patrons of the wealthy moneybags!

Away with tsars, kings, emperors, kaisers! Away with their ministers, policemen and corrupt officials!

State power should belong to the people!

Let he who desires peace, let he who is weary of this criminal war, join the ranks of those fighting not against an *external*, but against the *internal* enemy of the people. Let him say to himself: instead of dying for the greater profit of the Krestovnikovs, the Guchkovs, the Morozovs, the Purishkeviches and all their honourable fraternity, I will give my life for the freedom of my people, for the rights of the working class, for the victory of the workers' cause!...

If the Russian workers, the German workers and the workers of all the belligerent countries say this, there will no longer exist in the world a power willing to let the bloodshed continue, and peace will follow automatically.

All that is necessary is that each soldier at the front, each worker in the workshop, should realise: my enemy is not the one who, like myself in my own country, has no rights, who is oppressed by capital, whose life is a struggle for his daily bread.

My enemy is in my own country, and this enemy is the same for all the workers of the world. This enemy is *capitalism*, this enemy is the *rapacious, corrupt class government*. This enemy is *the lack of rights suffered by the working class*. Comrade worker, a private in the enemy army, I know now that it is not you who are my enemy. Give me your hand, comrade! We are both of us the victims of deception and violence. Our main and common enemy is at

our rear. Let us turn our rifles and guns against our real, our common enemies...

And then all our brave commanders, field marshals and generals will take to their heels!...

Let us each go to war in our own country against our oppressors, let us cleanse our homelands from the real enemies of the people, from the tsars, kings and emperors!

And when power is in our hands, we will conclude our own peace over the heads of the defeated capitalists...

This is the way forward for those who wish to fight for a *stable peace* among the nations, for the victory of the workers' cause, for the replacement of capitalist society by a just and better world based on the *socialist brotherhood of the workers of every country.*

This is the path, comrades, which you are being called to follow by the organised, conscious worker-socialists of Russia, Germany, England, France, Italy, Bulgaria and other states, by those socialists who have remained true to the workers' cause, who have not forgotten the great workers' behest: '*Workers of all countries, unite!*'

Rally round the red banner of the revolutionary workers' organisations!

To work, comrades, to work!

There have been enough victims to the glory of capital. Our common enemy lies in our rear! Away with those responsible for the war! Away with capitalists and tsars! Let us fight for the freedom of our homeland, for stable peace!

Long live the approaching, long-awaited social revolution! Long live the victory of the socialist brotherhood of nations!

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Why Was the German Proletariat Silent in the July Days?

September 1915

Many people still cannot understand how or why it could be that the German proletarians were suddenly transformed from class fighters into an obedient herd going with heads bowed to certain death. For many people it is still a mystery why these masses – and we are talking of the broad masses and not the leaders – did nothing to defend their previous positions of principle when the guns began to roar in Europe, but gave up their worker fortresses to the class enemy without a struggle. Any protest, any opposition might have been suppressed from the very start, but why did discontent not seethe and boil among the people, leading to spontaneous demonstrations and mass resistance? Was not the education of the workers of Germany guided by a political party which, in its theoretical schooling, served as the model for the proletariat of the whole world? Does this mean that socialist education does not yield the fruit we are entitled to expect?

Thus query the sceptics. Others, including certain Russian social-chauvinists, germanophiles, are ready to see this as an example of the 'political awareness' of the German workers: the masses realised in time that it was a question of the further unimpeded development of the productive forces of Germany, which closely affects the success of the workers' movement, and decided, in the 'national interest', not to hinder the valiant work of German arms.

However, both those who in pain and confusion criticise the German working masses, and those who hasten to their defence are both alike slandering the masses. They are looking only at the visible result and overlooking the fundamental, internal cause of the silence and inactivity of the masses in the historic days of July and August. The inactivity of the masses at that critical moment came as a surprise only to those whose knowledge of the German workers' movement is based on the impressive figures quoted in its annual reports, on its 'workers' palaces' and the growing number of workers who are deputies

in local and central government. For those who were familiar with the 'everyday life' of the German movement, this silence and inactivity on the part of the broad masses was not unexpected. However, it is not the masses who are to blame. The cause goes far deeper and is to be found in the nature, the spirit of the German workers' movement over recent years.

If the working masses are to be able not only to understand the political events taking place, but also actively respond to them without waiting to be told by their leaders, the proletariat must be accustomed to public action, must have faith in its own forces, must have that which is called 'revolutionary experience'. However, this was precisely the kind of experience that was avoided in Germany. The party resembled a teacher of the old school: on the one hand it developed class thinking, but on the other it did all it could to restrain and brake any manifestation of revolutionary will, of mass activity... The workers were taught how, in theory, to recognise and understand the significance and benefit of revolutionary struggle. Their heads were filled with historical examples, with facts... However, that the workers should be given the opportunity to measure their strength against that of their class enemies, temper their spirit and will by experiencing the vagaries and sacrifices of mass action and revolutionary struggle, was something that their 'sober-minded' leader-guardians did not wish to permit.

Take the sphere of trade union struggle. The dizzy successes achieved by German industry over the previous 20 years had created an atmosphere conducive to the pursuit of compromise tactics. In order to avoid open conflict, which is often damaging for the capitalist and always fraught with consequences, the employers willingly tossed sops to the workers, and the trade union centres eagerly seized them and entered into talks with the bosses to find a 'peaceful compromise'. Is it not characteristic of the situation that, while the absolute number of conflicts is rising, the relative number of conflicts that result in a strike is decreasing. * Many see in this proof that the power and importance of trade union organisations are increasing. The masses can stay inactive, the masses may confidently entrust their interests to their centres – these centres know how to find a way out of every conflict, know how to influence the boss!...

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* Cf. the last two reports of the International Trade Union Bureau, drawn up by Legin.

However, if one considers that the majority of the conflicts resolved without the participation of the mass of the workers, without strike action, end with a compromise, and, moreover, a compromise in favour of capital rather than in favour of labour, one is obliged to take a different view of this phenomenon...

How often have the workers and their leaders clashed on this very issue! One has only to recall the strike by the Hamburg iron and steel workers, which was sabotaged by their own centres.

In assessing similar phenomena with regard to the activity of English trade unions (in particular up to the wave of mass strikes in 1911-1912), revolutionary Marxists always pointed to the danger such opportunist tactics present for the revolutionary working-class movement. However, few of those looking on from outside noticed that, in their methods of solving conflicts by 'peaceful means', the German trade unions outdid even their English teachers.

Not only the trade unions, however, 'sinned' in the sense of lowering the activity of the broad working-class masses. The political party also trod the same path. One would have thought that a party which bases its tactics on the principle of the revolutionary conquest of political power should strive to use every opportunity for political struggle in order to develop and test the revolutionary energy of the masses and accustom them to mass action.

In practice, however, particularly over recent years, the centres of the party movement have been concerned to do just the opposite... This was pointed out quite categorically by the left opposition elements within the party, but their voices were drowned by the recognised authorities, by the representatives of the upper echelons. Whether it was the struggle against the rising cost of living or the question of achieving rights for workers in the Prussian Landtag, the party sought legal methods of struggle wherever possible. If it was suggested that the struggle might be taken outside closed meetings and given a more active, more revolutionary character, the centres threw up their hands in fear.

'Experiment? God forbid!... We are still not strong enough. We still do not have enough party workers. Defeat would lead to enormous losses in the next elections.'

'Nur immer langsam voran!' The morale of the masses crumbled; the masses grew accustomed to passivity; the revolutionary will of the masses stagnated; the initiative of the

masses was not developed, and they never developed the habit of responding actively to events without waiting for the order from their leader.

Is it surprising, therefore, that in July 1914, at a moment when history demanded that it be uncompromising and capable of revolutionary action, the German proletariat, taught to respect only 'peaceful', legal methods of struggle, proved incapable of an independent, active response to events? The masses trustingly awaited the word 'from above', but those above, pointing to the inactivity of the masses, shrugged their shoulders helplessly and jumped to the conclusion that the masses, clearly, were for war!

They did not seek to verify this conclusion either by a referendum (a measure that the much-vaunted organisation of the party by no means renders impossible), or by a call for decisive revolutionary opposition to the plans of the class authorities. The upper echelons, the centres, did not appeal to the militancy of the workers, did not turn to party democracy for support in determining their tactics on an issue that was not only a question of life and death for hundreds of thousands, for millions of their comrades, but also a question of vital importance for the whole of the workers' International.

The leadership, leaving the masses to their own fate, simply lowered the revolutionary banner without resistance or battle... How many conscious workers were thrown into confusion by the behaviour of the leadership! Accustomed to follow their centres obediently, without criticism, the workers cast aside or smothered the doubts that tormented them.

'Our elected representatives are voting for war, *Vorwärts*[36] advises us not to give way to our emotions and not to do anything rash that would serve as a pretext for excesses... Clearly they, our elected representatives, see and know that which escapes our understanding?' And the workers, those who worked among the masses, went to their battle posts, went to certain death, convinced that their leaders knew for what they were to sacrifice their lives...

Would such an abnormal, damaging phenomenon have been possible if the masses had been taught to respond actively and independently to events, if the party had not carefully extinguished every spontaneous protest, every manifestation of popular implacability? If the masses remained silent at a moment of momentous historical importance, the blame lies entirely with those who, in their deference to peaceful means, to legal methods of struggle, in their hatred of all that is

revolutionary, principled and uncompromising, had for years brought up the workers in the spirit of 'peaceful growth', had for years soothed the energetic, creative upsurges of class rebelliousness. Illegal appeals, manifestoes, unauthorised meetings in workshops, on streets and squares, the revolutionary call: 'Onto the streets in the battle against war!'–all these means of self-defence, all these methods that emerge spontaneously in the upsurge of revolutionary fervour, lay, during the days of July, beyond the reach of a working class brought up in the framework of strict legality and unquestioning subordination to its own leadership. The approaching menace of world war was not to be averted by the customary demonstrations supervised by the police or theoretical discussions of the causes and the significance of war. The 'god of war' would give way only before the 'red spectre', aroused into energetic action...

However, the habit of using only legal methods, only 'permissible', peaceful means of self-defence, bound the German proletariat hand and foot and tossed it thus bound under the wheels of the chariot of war.

This lesson will not go unheeded by the proletariat of the world. This bloody age, this age that reveals all the ills hidden within individual, socialist parties, clearly shows that the theory of 'adaptation' by the workers' movement to the capitalist system of its own country, the theory of 'peaceful struggle' for class supremacy, is one of the greatest dangers facing the international, revolutionary-class liberation movement of the workers.

Let those who condemn the German workers for lack of action, and those who see in this inaction the proof of their 'political maturity' remember that the masses will be able to find their voice in moments of historical importance only when the proletarian vanguard, the socialist parties in every country, having thrown off the benumbing shakles of social-reformism, boldly advance every means, every way, every method of struggle prompted by revolutionary creativity...

The magazine *Kommunist*
(Switzerland), Nos. 1-2, 1915,
pp. 159-161

Preface to the Book 'Society and Motherhood' [37]

1915

Among the numerous problems raised by contemporary reality there is probably none more important for mankind, none more vital and urgent than the *problem of motherhood* created by the large-scale capitalist economic system. The problem of protecting and providing for the mother and young child is one that faces social politicians, knocks relentlessly at the door of the statesman, engages the health and hygiene specialists, concerns the social statistician, haunts the representative of the working class and weighs down on the shoulders of tens of millions of mothers compelled to earn their own living.

Side by side with the problem of sex and marriage, enveloped in the poetical language of the psychological suffering, insoluble difficulties and unsatisfied needs of noble souls, there is always to be found the majestic and tragic figure of motherhood wearily carrying her heavy burden. Neo-malthusians, social-reformers and philanthropists have all hastened to provide their own particular solution to this thorny problem, and all sing the praises of their own method of restoring paradise lost to mothers and babies.

Meanwhile the number of children's corpses grows and grows, and the unruly birth rate, instead of 'sensibly' rising to the level that would meet the requirements of the state, reveals an unpleasant tendency to steady decline. The prosperity of national industry and the development of the national economy depend upon a constant supply of fresh labour; the military might of the nation is ensured by the continual increase in the able-bodied male population. What should be done if the population growth not only diminishes with every decade but, as is the case in France, repeatedly drops below replacement level? Disturbed by these worrying symptoms, the state authorities in one country after another are joining the ranks of the defenders of young children and are turning to a principle alien in spirit to the modern order – *the principle of*

state maternity insurance, a principle in sharp contradiction with the present social structure as the latter undermines the basis of marriage and violates the fundamental concepts of private-family rights and relationships. However, if, in the name of 'higher' considerations of state and under the pressure of necessity, the state authorities have been compelled to advance and implement a measure so at odds with the prevailing spirit of the representatives of the bourgeois world, at the other end of the social scale, among the working class, the principle of providing for and protecting mother and child is welcomed with enthusiasm and sympathy.

The demand that the social collective (the community) provide maternity insurance and child protection was born of the immediate and vital needs of the class of hired workers. Of all the strata of society, this class is the one which most requires that a solution be found to the painful conflict between compulsory professional labour by women and their duties as representatives of their sex, as mothers. Following a powerful class instinct rather than a clearly understood idea, the working class strove to find a way of resolving this conflict.

It was only feeling its way forward, and did not immediately choose the right path, but nonetheless it was without doubt the organised section of the working class that called for the defence of motherhood when the representatives of other classes were still denying the existence of the very problem, and when the measures suggested to solve it were looked upon as childish utopianism. As early as the first congress of the International in the late 1860s, the socialists raised the question of the protection of women workers as mothers and representatives of their sex. Since then the organised representatives of the working class have constantly returned to this question. The measures originally proposed by the workers were, it is true, somewhat inconsistent and contradictory, and did not correspond to the basic tendencies within the workers' movement. However, as the close link between the working-class movement and the trend of increasing female professional labour became clearer, the basic demands of male and female workers on this issue were gradually defined.

The demands at present being put forward by socialists for the protection of and provision for mother and child are fully in accord with the overall tasks of the socialist movement. The evolution of social relations is clearly demonstrating that in this area the dominant trend is towards the transfer to the social collective (community) of those tasks and duties that hitherto

were considered to be the inalienable functions of the members of individual families.

Thus it has come about that, approaching this issue from different points of view and basing themselves on different reasons, both the state authorities on the one hand and the socialist parties on the other have arrived at one and the same conclusion, namely the need for state protection and provision for motherhood. The difference of opinion that now exists concerns not the recognition of the *principle of maternity insurance*, as was the case until fairly recently, but rather the application of this socio-political measure, its scope and implementation. Even in those countries that have already taken the first steps towards providing maternity insurance, the state authorities are seeking to limit themselves to the minimum, making concession after concession to a disapproving bourgeois world. The representatives of the working class, on the other hand, are demanding radical measures and are subjecting to merciless criticism the inadequate reforms introduced by the present governments, who are attempting to defend the mother and child with one arm, while upholding with the other the very system of exploited hired labour which leads to the destruction of both.

The question of protecting and providing for motherhood via state insurance is one that arose only recently. Moreover, one of the most characteristic features of this social measure is that, here, practice preceded theory. The first step to protect the mother by legislation was taken in Switzerland in 1878, when an eight-week maternity leave for the working mother was made compulsory. State maternity insurance first began in Germany when, in 1883, a special clause on assistance for nursing mothers was included in the law on health insurance. Neither of these measures was dictated primarily by humanitarian considerations or the interests of working mothers. They were both prompted by the same phenomena, which for the first time were causing concern among state authorities: the horrific level of infant mortality in industrial areas (it had reached 65 per cent in the industrial districts of Germany by the 1870s), and the growing shortage of army recruits.

However, while the state authorities were taking the first practical steps towards protection and provision for mother and child, they, together with the representatives of the bourgeois world, were drowning with their cries of disapproval the first apostles of the concept of comprehensive maternity

insurance, such visionary philanthropists as Jules Simon, Félix Poussineau, the famous French gynaecologist Adolphe Pinard, the theoreticians Louis Frank in Belgium and Paulina Schiff in Italy, Ellen Key in Sweden and, later, Ruth Bré in Germany, all of whom advanced this idea in the name of 'humanity' and 'justice', in the name of the health and viability of the nation, in the name of the reassertion of the oldest of women's rights – the right to motherhood. While giving way to necessity, the state authorities attempted for some time to preserve outward decorum and to give the impression that the practical recognition of the principle of maternity insurance in no way contradicted the inviolability of the private family unit. Thus governments constantly emphasised that provision for nursing mothers is not a maternity payment, but simply a payment made during enforced unemployment.

Despite their inconsistency, the state authorities are being compelled in practice to move further and further along the road of state protection and provision for mothers. Whereas, only some twenty years ago, the idea of state maternity insurance was looked upon as utopianism, now such insurance is a practical reality included among the urgent socio-political tasks facing any 'far-sighted' government.

All those measures to protect and provide for mother and child which are now being implemented by the authorities with extreme caution and circumspection are, of course, very far from adequate. They are, as yet, nothing more than the first uncertain steps on the long and difficult path that leads to the realisation of the ideal: the transfer of the task of caring for the new generation, so precious to mankind, from the shoulders of private, individual parents to the whole community. What has been done so far in this area is nothing more than the proclamation and recognition of the *principle* – but this itself is of major importance and brings with it many implications.

Over the last ten years, i.e., in the first decade of the 20th century, an important step forward has been taken on the question of maternity insurance. In recent years this issue has not only been raised at workers' congresses, but has also come to the attention of the broad public and aroused interest among public hygiene experts and physicians, statisticians and social politicians. In a number of countries it has remained constantly on the parliamentary agenda. It provoked heated debate in the German Reichstag (the 1910-1911 session), while the French Assembly and Senate have discussed the question several times during recent years (1908-1913), and the English Parliament

touched upon it during the debate of the national insurance bill (1909 and 1913). It has been debated in the Italian parliament (1905-1910), in the Swiss Federal Assembly (1906-1911), the Austrian parliament (1909-1913), in the Norwegian Storting (1909-1911), in the national parliaments of Sweden, Finland, Rumania and Serbia, and at the Third State Duma in Russia during the elaboration of legislation on health insurance (1909-1912). The result has been the introduction of state insurance for nursing mothers in eight European states (Italy, France, Norway, Switzerland, Russia, Rumania, England, and Serbia-Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Australia, and also the extension of insurance legislation covering working mothers in those countries that had already introduced this form of social insurance (Germany, Austria, Hungary and Luxembourg).

Nonetheless, despite the indisputable signs of growing interest in the question of providing for mother and child, this task, which is of the utmost importance for the state, is still receiving too little attention even in countries which are leading the way in terms of social legislation. The state authorities are doing all they can to limit themselves to reforms in the narrow sphere of direct protection for nursing mothers, leaving the working mother to spend the rest of her life subjected to precisely those deleterious living and working conditions which render normal motherhood impossible. What is more, the question of provision and protection for mother and child is an aspect of social policy which cannot be arbitrarily separated off from other, closely related reforms affecting the labour and living conditions of the working class. Will the mother and child gain any significant benefit from the introduction of relatively comprehensive protection if the working woman is subjected for the rest of the time to unrestricted exploitation by capital, if her working day is so long as to sap her strength, and the whole of the working class exists permanently on the edge of starvation?

If the problem of protection and provision for mother and child is to receive a solution that is in any way satisfactory, this can only be achieved by the simultaneous introduction of a complex system of radical financial and economic reforms, which all state authorities are so reluctant to accept. The ruling circles prefer to stretch out their protecting arm to the woman of the working class only at the moment when she is providing the state with a new member, while for the rest of the time it leaves her in the grip of merciless exploitation by capital. This same mistake is repeated by the social-reformers when they

suggest the implementation of isolated solutions to the problem of motherhood, rejecting all those fundamental demands advanced by the organised working class in behalf of the working woman both as a member of the working class and as the bearer of the future, as a mother.

Protection and provision for mother and child constitute an integral part of the total network of social reforms indicated by the working class, and this is the chief merit of those measures to protect mothers proposed by the Social-Democrats. These measures make up, as it were, consecutive rungs in the ladder which leads to the ideal-aim that beckons us to follow in pursuit – the comprehensive solution of the problem of motherhood. This problem is closely bound up with basic class objectives and cannot be solved if the ultimate aim of that class is not realised. However, it is precisely because the issue of maternity insurance constitutes an integral part of the socialist programme and is inseparable from it, it is precisely because this problem affects as no other the interests of the working class, that one cannot but be surprised that socialist thought has done so little as regards the theoretical elaboration of the question of provision for mothers and protection for young children. There is no issue of social policy so scantily represented in socialist literature as this fundametal and complex issue of motherhood, so important for the future.

Practice has here, once again, outstripped theory, and the very demands made by the socialists in the sphere of protection and provision for mother and child are still in the process of taking shape. There is as yet no work imbued with the spirit of socialism which provides a serious and in any way comprehensive analysis of this section of the working-class programme and examines to what extent the practical measures and demands put forward correspond to the aims of the class and the interests of the movement, and this despite the fact that such a question merits more serious attention on the part of those who represent the class that is most affected by it. Does not this issue touch upon the most fundamental essentials of modern society? Does it not directly affect the fate of the family? Does it not alter the very nature of marital relations? Does it not constitute an important element in the foundations of the proposed future social structure? Is it not time to correlate the demand for comprehensive maternity insurance with the basic objectives of the working class, to clearly recognise the position occupied by this part of the socialist programme in the total majestic plan of social transformation?

Socialist literature still does not provide a clear, theoretically substantiated answer to the following important question: which of the existing forms of maternity insurance most corresponds to the interests of the working class and comes closest to meeting its basic objectives? Is the spread of that form of maternity provision which comprises insurance for expectant and nursing mothers within the health insurance system – the form adopted by the government in Germany and taken as a model by many other governments – in fact desirable from the point of view of the workers? Should it not rather serve merely as a transitional stage in the move towards a more complete, a more comprehensive system of maternity provision which, in view of the scale of the task itself, should become part of a social insurance system founded upon a different principle?

The answers to these questions depend on the way maternity insurance is to be defined and the attitude to the function of child-bearing. There exist three different points of view on this subject.

If one adopts the point of view of the German legislators and equates giving birth with a pathological phenomenon, an illness resulting in enforced unemployment, against which the woman is insured, then the fact that maternity insurance and health insurance are treated as one appears logical. But does this identification meet the interests of the working class? And can any comprehensive maternity provisions be brought within the narrow, already clearly defined framework of health insurance? The very legislators who introduced this identification are compelled, even given the present modest scale of maternity insurance, to go beyond the confines of health insurance and append supplementary paragraphs on working mothers. Unwilling to recognise maternity insurance as an independent branch of social insurance, the legislators are opting for a middle path and converting maternity provision into a function of the health insurance system that is conceptually distinct from ordinary sickness benefit.

However, there is another view of maternity provision supported mainly by the Romance countries: maternity is viewed as a particular social function, and the assistance given to the working mother is treated as a *reward* for the service that the mother is performing for the state. Such a point of view results in the formulation of a different principle of maternity insurance that is not connected with illness and enforced unemployment, and which makes it possible to separate off maternity provision as a special and independent branch of

insurance. Is this viewpoint acceptable for the working class? Does it meet the interests of the movement. This is another question to which no direct answer is to be found in socialist literature.

Finally there is the third view of maternity provision as one of the means of lightening the burden of motherhood for the woman worker, as a transitional stage on the way to a situation in which concern for the new generation will cease to lie with individuals and will be handed over to society. That this last view comes closest to meeting the interests of the working class can be seen from the fact that it most fully corresponds both to the ideal of the future relationship between the sexes and to the mutual obligations of the community and the individual which are to underlie a social system built upon a different labour principle. In formulating the social measures which are designed to protect motherhood, the organised working class must proceed on the basis of this ultimate ideal-aim, which promises fully to resolve the problem of motherhood. This fundamental proposal and ideal must also serve as the criterion when Social-Democracy is choosing between different systems of maternity insurance.

However, in order to choose correctly between these forms of maternity provision, one must carefully examine the third of the points of view cited above in order to judge to what extent it does, in fact, correspond to the general plan for the future development of society and to those socialist ideals that follow therefrom.

That view of maternity insurance which sees it as a measure to lighten the burden of motherhood for the working-class woman and, at the same time, as a measure encouraging the transfer of concern for the new generation from private individuals (parents) to the community, is acceptable only if one admits that the present form of the family will inevitably collapse and disintegrate in the course of the future historical evolution of society. While the family was strong, stable, viable, while the woman lived and worked exclusively within the family, the question of protecting and providing for motherhood could never arise.

The problem of motherhood is an offspring of large-scale capitalist production, as are a number of other urgent social ills which together compose the social question facing modern society. The problem of maternity came into existence together with the labour problem, has existed since the women of the deprived strata of society have been compelled to tear the child

from the breast and take their labour to the labour market.

The tremendous evolution of economic relations that, over the last hundred years, has overturned all the foundations of previous socio-economic relations, has directly affected the organisation of the family and caused its previous forms to disintegrate. The family as it has come down to us was based on specific economic principles. It rested on production relations which at that time bound the members of one family more firmly than could even the closest blood ties. In the days when the family was an economic unit, the smallest economic unity of the community, and moreover not merely a consumer but also a producer, a creative unit, the family (gens) was able, thanks to its joint use of what was then the major tool of production – land – to produce all that was necessary for its members; care for the young, their material support, upbringing and training were part of its natural and inalienable obligations. In order to flourish (both economically and socially), the family required new members, a constant inflow of fresh labour. It is not at all surprising that responsibility for the new generation then lay with the family, and that the family alone carried the full burden of the support and upbringing of the younger generation.

Today, however, when the family as a specific social unit has no production functions within the bourgeois order, with its widespread division of labour and individualistic principle of production, there are no longer any positive arguments that can justify leaving all responsibility for the new generation with this private unit.

The family of tribal life, the family as a productive unit providing its members with all the essentials of life, has passed into history. Now not only the fathers but increasingly the mothers also are working not within and for the family, but outside the family, on and for the market, serving with their labour not their blood relatives but strangers who are consumers on the commodity market. Now the constant inflow of fresh labour, necessary to ensure the further development of the productive forces, is no longer needed by the family, by a self-enclosed, small, private unit, but by the whole of the social collective.

Logically it would appear that responsibility for the new generation should lie with that economic unit, with that social collective which has need of that generation for its own future existence. Once the family has actually ceased to exist as an economic unit, once it has ceased to require an influx of fresh

labour, once the adult receives what he needs to live not from the family but from the wider community, the care of young children and the mothers who give birth to them should also be the responsibility of this community. Such an argument, however, is acceptable only to a society that is genuinely concerned to care for the interests of the entire 'whole' entrusted to it... Present state authorities on the other hand, who serve only the interests of the monopolists, seek to make use of the ready-made labour force while freeing themselves of all responsibility for the life of the children and mothers, preferring to impose on the individual private family those obligations which it once bore at another, earlier stage in human economic development. Such an inappropriate and contradictory state of affairs could only arise historically, but history is called upon to correct this unreasonable situation by gradually increasing communal concern over the fate of children and their mothers.

The thoughtlessness and indifference shown by modern society towards this important question of the fate of mothers and children will appear as gross negligence to future generations. Today we are in no way surprised that the state assumes responsibility for the sick, the handicapped, the insane, that it builds schools and universities and maintains public libraries and museums. On the contrary, we would be amazed if the public authorities suddenly declared that the upbringing and education of young people was a matter not for the state but for the family, pointing to the fact that once, in tribal life, all the knowledge a man acquired he acquired within the self-contained family unit. The people of the future will be no less amazed at the present common assertion that concern for the fate of mother and child is not an obligation of the community.

If the state finds it to its benefit to assume responsibility for the upbringing and education of youth, surely it should view it as even more important to save the hundreds of thousands (and in Russia more than a million) children who perish as a result of inadequate protection and the total lack of provision for motherhood. These hundreds of thousands of children are, after all, not only future producers, but also the future tax-payers so desired by the state and, moreover, also possible recruits!

The attempt to preserve the former obligations of the family on the basis of its outmoded form has the most regrettable consequences highly damaging to the interests of the whole of society: it leads to the deliberate lowering of the birth rate and

increases infant mortality.* With the full weight of responsibility for children lying on the individual family, those families that belong to the most deprived section of the populaton find children such an intolerable burden, find that they bring such worry, difficulty and sorrow, that a neo-Malthusian approach seems the only solution. If the worker has managed, by overcoming enormous difficulties, to attain a certain level of economic security and cultural development, then the only way he can safeguard this precious achievement on getting married is to remain childless. On the other hand, the lack of provision for motherhood, the lack of the necessary protection of the interests of the mother, leave the woman entirely in the power of those production relations which destroy both her and her child.

The lack of provision for millions of mothers, and the lack of concern for young children on the part of society, are the cause of the present bitter conflict over the incompatibility of female professional labour and motherhood, a conflict which lies at the heart of the whole problem of motherhood. This conflict has only two possible solutions: 1) either the woman must be returned to the home and forbidden any participation in national economic life or 2) such social measures, including comprehensive maternity insurance and provision for young children, must be implemented as will enable the woman *to fulfil her natural calling without abandoning her professional obligations, without losing her economic independence, and without withdrawing from active participation in the struggle for the ideals of her class.*

As the wheel of history cannot be turned back at will, the first solution must be discarded. Even if it proved possible forcibly to remove women from all the spheres of economic life in which her labour is now widely and regularly used, these measures would still be incapable of preventing the further disintegration of the family. Thus a woman with a child who was returned to the dying family hearth would have even less provision against the deprivation, care and sorrow caused by the burden of

* 'The principle of laying the economic burden of the upbringing of children upon the private households responsible for bringing them physically into the world,' says Doctor Schmidt, 'is so unreasonable, such a mad idea ... that our descendants will be totally unable to understand the outlook of an age to which this principle appeared normal and self-evident.' Dr. Kaspar Schmidt, 'Die Mutterschafts-versicherung als Grundlage einer mutterrechtlich-polygamischen Sexualordnung' in *Politisch-Antropologische Revue*, No. 5, 1906, S. 283.

numerous children than she has in the present set of transitory circumstances.

There therefore remains only the second solution advanced by the organised working class. This solution means that the question of insurance must be approached from the point of view of lightening the burden of motherhood for working-class women by gradually increasing social concern for the fate of young children and providing comprehensive protection of the interests of the mothers themselves. Basing oneself on the general pattern of the future historical development of social relations, one cannot but conclude that maternity insurance must be viewed not as mere assistance rendered necessary by temporary unemployment and inseparable from health insurance, nor as a reward paid to mothers for the service they have rendered to the state, but as a step forward in the process of transferring care of the next generation into the hands of the community, as one of the measures leading to female emancipation.

Such an approach to the question of maternity insurance follows from the very principle underlying the socialist movement, and fully corresponds to that new morality in the sphere of relationships between the sexes that is gradually taking shape among the working class in the very course of the class struggle.

Statistics from every country show one and the same picture: the age at which people, even from the working class, are entering into marriage is constantly rising. Previously, workers married at the age of 20-22 years; now they marry at the age of 27-29 years. Low wages on the one hand and increasing cultural requirements on the other do not permit the worker to assume all the responsibilities of married life at an early age. However, neither the heart nor physiological needs take into account the size of the weekly wage... The rusult – 'irregular relationships' and, as the novelists call it, 'free love'; and this free cohabitation leads to free motherhood, the full burden of which falls upon the woman.

Free motherhood, the 'right to be a mother' – fine words, and what woman's heart does not respond to this natural requirement? However, in the present circumstances, 'free motherhood' is a harsh right which not only does not liberate the woman, but is the source of endless shame, humiliation, and dependence, the cause of crime and death... Is it then surprising that in such abnormal circumstances the woman does all she can to bind to her the man who is the father of her child in

order to transfer to his shoulders the expense of providing for the child? For his part, the man concedes, i.e. agrees to the legislation of their relationship, often not so much out of love for the woman and child, but out of a sense of duty. If there had been no 'consequences', those who had come together freely would separate on friendly terms to go their different ways, but the child exists, and the 'guilty' man considers it his duty to lead the woman down the aisle in order to share the burden of family care.

How often is it that the ceremony of marriage, even among the working class, is a funeral service said over the corpse of dead feelings... Is it then surprising that fear of the consequences obliges the workers to be wary as regards relations between lovers, and to have recourse more and more frequently to neo-Malthusian practices.

The problem is also not solved when the man, having refused to marry, agrees to pay child maintenance to the woman who has had his child. Economic dependence is always felt to be oppressive, burdensome and humiliating. It is particularly burdensome for a working woman accustomed from her youth to economic independence, even from her parents. This work-based economic independence gradually moulds the woman into a fellow comrade, an active and conscious member of her class. The fact of receiving 'financial support' from a comrade-in-arms is so unpleasant, so bitter, that it may completely warp the most sincere and friendly of relations, while at the same time it reinforces the material dependence of the woman on the man and violates the principle of the equality of all the members of one and the same class.

How different would be the relations between the sexes in the working class if the question of 'consequences' was not the determining factor in deciding whether to marry, and if it did not join by force in a situation where the whole value of the relationship is based on inner freedom. However, there is only one way to free marriage of the calculations that have become a part of it and which have nothing to do with love, but result from the pressures imposed by the family as it now exists, and that is to advance the principle of general and comprehensive provision for motherhood.

If every working woman was guaranteed the possibility of giving birth to her child in healthy conditions, with the appropriate care for herself and her child, the possibility of looking after the child during the first weeks of its life, the possibility of feeding him herself without the risk of loss of pay,

this would constitute the first step to the designated end. If, in addition, the state and the community would undertake to build refuges for expectant and nursing women, to provide medical consultations for mother and child, and to supply high-quality milk and a layette, if there was a broad network of crèches, nursery schools and children's centres where the working mother could leave her child with a quiet mind, this would be the second step towards the designated end.

If social legislation attached due importance to the protection of female labour, established a short working day, break periods for nursing mothers and a shortened day for young girls, took steps to replace harmful production methods with techniques less injurious to female physiology, prohibited a number of dangerous labour practices, etc., this would be the third step towards the designated end.

Finally, if the community – i. e. the state – would guarantee to mothers during pregnancy, birth and the nursing period material assistance sufficient to meet the needs of both her and the child, this would be the fourth and most important step forward.

The working class now faces the following task: to achieve everywhere the implementation of those reforms and social measures which would not only take from the shoulders of women burdened with professional labour the main load of motherhood, but would also guarantee the necessary care for the new-born child, thus saving this young life, that has barely started on its way, from the jaws of premature death. The problem of motherhood is closely linked to the fate of the working class, and both its sexes, women and men, have an interest in its solution. Only if the whole of society implements the principle of rationally providing for the mother and protecting the child can relations between the sexes among the working class be cleansed of that bourgeois grime which now besmirches them. Only this will facilitate the emergence of the new morality and the new relations between men and women required by the movement: the increase in comradeship between the two sexes with their total economic independence the one from the other.

From whichever angle one approaches the question of maternity insurance, from a point of view limited strictly to considerations of state, from a class point of view or from the point of view of the interests of mankind as a whole, the conclusion remains one and the same: maternity insurance is

a social policy issue requiring immediate attention and must be further developed and improved.

The more completely and comprehensively this problem is solved within the framework of modern production relations, the shorter will be the path to the new 'era' of human history...

A. Kollontai,
Society and Motherhood
Petrograd, 1916,
pp. 3-18,
abridged

The Statue of Liberty

The End of 1916

Which of us in our childhood did not gaze in awe at the mighty Statue of Liberty, its burning torch lighting the entrance to an international port, to a New World that still retained all its alluring, fairy-tale strangeness for the European? Which of us in our childhood was not struck by its grandeur as it soared above the New York skyscraper skyline? How pitifully small and insignificant did the huge ocean-going ships appear in these pictures as they scurried at the feet of proud and victorious Freedom!...

As our Norwegian steamer *Bergensfjord* slowly and carefully picked its way among the business-like scurry of ships from all the great nations of the world, we naive Europeans eagerly strained our eyes to catch a glimpse of her, the Statue of Liberty promised us [from childhood].

Then, on my first visit to America a year ago, [38] the Statue of Liberty was hidden by a thick autumn fog which shrouded from our naively searching eyes that symbol which once caused the hearts of our European fathers and grandfathers to beat with triumphant happiness and exultation.

For me, the Statue of Liberty remained shrouded, mysterious, beckoning, the powerful image of our imagination. I saw it for the first time four and a half months later, after my whirlwing tour of the United States... By then America had already ceased to be for me the promised land of possibility. During those four and a half months I had seen politicians insistently preaching in favour of militarism and the bitter struggle waged by labour against unrestrained American capital, the power wielded by the American police and the omnipotence of the trust kings, the corruption of American courts, the servility of the American capitalist press ... and the 'freedom' of the independent church... Now I had a clear picture of what America is really like, a clear picture of the 'land of freedom', of the New World discovered by Columbus and still enticing the European!

It was then, standing on board the steamer bearing me back to the Old World, that I first saw the Statue of Liberty. It was a clear, cold day in early spring. Slowly, as if unwilling to leave the safety of the port for the stormy unknown of the open sea, the same *Bergensfjord* sailed past the 'eighth wonder of the world', past the statue whose picture is known to all.

Now it was not hidden by fog; now the sun illuminated every line of this bronze image. And still I refused to believe my eyes! Is that the Statue of Liberty? So tiny, lost in the noise of the harbour and framed against the soaring skyscrapers of the Wall Street banks. Was this powerless, tiny figure shrinking before the all-powerful gigantic skyscrapers, those guardians of financial deals, the Statue of Liberty we had pictured to ourselves?

Perhaps it is the insolence of the politicians and the kings of capital, curtailing day by day the freedoms won by the blood of the forefathers of the modern Uncle Sam, that is forcing the Statue of Liberty to shrink, to curl up in dismay and shame? When you are at the mercy of the ocean, when you look ahead to fantastic adventures that seem to come straight from a medieval tale ... then you are inevitably inclined to the mystic, ready to believe in a great miracle, in fairy tales...

The outlines of the city, the huge, twisting, relentlessly upward-thrusting lines of the New York skyscrapers, begin to blur. The Statue of Liberty has long since become a scarcely visible dot. It has disappeared. A little while longer, and America will lose reality for us, will become one of the images of the succession of life's memories.

It was then that I realised that the New World, the Statue of Liberty, is simply an old and forgotten legend, a fairy tale of precapitalist times which can only be recounted from the reminiscences of our grandfathers.

For our grandfathers and great-grandfathers the New World was truly the land of freedom. Here, whatever they had been in ageing Europe, they felt themselves to be the sons and equal citizens of a free country. Here they could pray to their God according to their own beloved rites. Here they could still believe that a man could forge his own happiness, wealth and destiny, with his own hands. Here the fairy of success still freely beckoned to unsettled lands and fruitful plains, to barren mountains concealing gold.

Back in old Europe, feudalism had still not receded before the onslaught of the privileged trading aristocracy of the bourgeoisie, the air was still redolent with incense, society was

still dominated by the inequality of social strata and classes, and men were still oppressed by ugly, age-old prejudices. Is it any wonder that our grandfathers and great-grandfathers stretched out their hands rapturously to the shores of the New World and fell down before the green-bronze Statue of Liberty?

But how distant that all is now! The tales of American freedom have become mere legend!

The Statue of Liberty has been suppressed. The skyscrapers have robbed her of her halo, and now it is no longer she who soars above the bay of this international city, no longer she who lights the way into the international port, into the New World. Millions of lights from the windows of the fifty-storey skyscraper office-blocks eclipse the light of the goddess of Liberty. The grey giants look out derisively over the narrow New York streets which, jammed with businessmen and their clerks, thread their way far below like canyon streams between cliff walls. And it is these solid walls of stone, the safe refuge of the kings of American capital, which now more completely express the 'spirit' that reigns over the continent of Columbus than the pitiful, shrunken, green statue that seems to be embarrassed.

I saw the statue a second time only recently, this time lit up by the rays of the early morning sun. And, strange to relate! – this time the passengers did not gaze out in search of the Statue of Liberty. It was as if the hard and bloody year that had just passed had taught its lesson to Europeans who had once so easily believed in a happiness to be found across the ocean. It was not the Statue of Liberty they were looking for, but the steamer carrying the American authorities and representatives of the emigration bureau who sorted out the passengers and dispatched the majority of the 3rd-class, and perhaps also some of us, the 2nd-class passengers, to the infamous 'Island of Tears'.

And, indeed, the steamer did pull up alongside our floating home... The long procession of 3rd-class passengers must undergo a humiliating interrogation and a number of unpleasant formalities, and must then wait upon a barren island until kind friends come to their assistance. It might even happen that 3rd-class, and sometimes even 2nd-class passengers are unceremoniously taken off to an American jail until their identity is confirmed.

However, God forbid that anything of the kind should happen to 1st-class passengers! Could a 1st-class passenger, carrying in his pocket cheques for a Wall Street bank, be an

unwelcome foreigner in the great republic? The red carpet is put down for the 1st-class passenger, and for him the Statue of Liberty makes her dim torch blaze anew. This colleague of the modern kings of the free republic will receive everything that the Statue of Liberty once promised to every newcomer to the New World.

But how dimly that same statue lights the way to that New World for those who were only able to buy a 3rd-class ticket...

And one feels ashamed for the Statue of Liberty, and regrets those sweet moments of expectation a year ago when we, naive Europeans, strained our eyes to see in the autumn mist that statue we remembered from childern's illustrations which taught us to love the 'New World', to love a land built by the people themselves, to love political liberty!

Magazine *Inostrannaya Literatura*
(Foreign Literature),
No. 2, 1970, Moscow,
pp. 244-245

Our Memorial to the Fighters for Freedom

March 1917

There are memorable days in the life of mankind which run like a golden thread of popular celebration down the centuries. There are days which are equal to centuries in the history of humanity, and which proclaim that, however cruelly the people may be oppressed by *violence* and *arbitrary rule*, the hour will come when a mighty, triumphant, indestructible force–the spirit of the fraternal unity of the workers in close alliance with the revolutionary will of the deprived masses–will overthrow the old, outworn order through a powerful upsurge of popular wrath, through the onslaught of democracy stirred into heroic rebellion.

Today is the day when we are burying the heroic victims of the Russian revolution; today is a solemn day of joy and of mourning.[39] Today the eyes of the oppressed and deprived of the whole world are turned towards Russia, to this city where the heroic resolution of the workers and the downtrodden Russian peasantry has thrown off the yoke of tsarist autocracy.

Today, as we bury the heroic victims of the revolution who gave their lives to win for the people the greatest right of all–the right to freedom–we are not only singing songs of fraternal sorrow over the graves of these heroes, but also a hymn of victory over the grave of tsarist autocracy with all its crimes and bloodshed, its obscurantism, its cruel indifference to the sufferings of the working people, its serfdom, its abuse of the common soldiers, its corrupt tsarist officials, its prisons, its Siberian exile, its whips, gallows, arbitrary violence and oppression.

And therefore the spring air is filled not only with songs of mourning for those who have fallen in the struggle for freedom, but also with the millions of voices of an exultant choir proclaiming the victory of the revolution, the conquest by the people of that freedom which alone makes it possible to wage the struggle for bread, *for peace, for the consolidation*

of the power of proletarian democracy today, and socialism tomorrow.

Historical conditions, objective external forces, prepared the way over the years for the inevitable collapse of the old power, the inevitable dawn of 1st March, the victory of the new Russia; for decades a mortal struggle had been waged between the industrial capitalists and the landowning aristocracy of tsarist Russia. The imperialist world war aggravated the contradictions between Russia old and new, but it was only thanks to the appearance of a *living, active, militant force* that the great Russian revolution could take place. This living force was the mass onslaught of the working class and a peasantry dressed in soldiers' greatcoats and armed with guns.

Today, as we bury the heroes of the revolution, the proletariat throughout the world is celebrating the triumph of that doctrine – the doctrine of scientific socialism – which enabled the Russian socialists to predict the inevitability and imminence of the Russian revolution, and to organise the forces of the proletariat along the straight and proper road.

Today, when we are burying not only those who died for freedom, but also tsarist autocracy, revolutionary socialists, those who adhered resolutely to the decisions taken by international workers' congresses, can also celebrate their victory. Their tactic, their strategy of work and struggle, has emerged triumphant. Not the slogan of 'class peace' during the predatory, expansionist war among the capitalist states, but the slogan of class war, of civil war, that was defended and implemented with such heavy losses by the left wing of Russian Social-Democracy, has brought Russia to the great revolution and given Russian democracy the victory over the 'internal enemy'.

The Russian revolution is also a new triumph for that tactic, the tactic of *mass action* by workers' democracy in its highest form of revolutionary uprising by the organised masses, which should serve as the basis of the tactic of the new, the *Third International*, the International which will complete the great cause begun by those who fell during the Russian revolution.

Our comrades in other countries, those who march arm in arm with Liebknecht in Germany, MacLean in England, Höglund in Sweden, will be with us in spirit, following the funeral procession with the same feelings of grief for the fallen and the same exultation at the victory of freedom with

which millions of Russian soldiers and workers will today accompany their comrades-in-arms on their last journey. Our grief is their grief, but also our victory is the victory of workers' democracy throughout the world!

In saying farewell to the heroes who fell in the name of freedom, we will depart today from their graves imbued with firm resolution: the first step, the hardest step of the revolution, has been taken. Tsarist autocracy, a decaying corpse upon a throne, has been committed to the earth.

Today sees the completion of the first stage of the revolution, the stage which consists of the destruction of the old.

Now, comrades, let us hasten back to work! We must hurry, we must create the new! We must build a new, democratic, free Russia!... Do not delay, comrades!

Today we are burying our hero-comrades, but tomorrow we must begin to build them a majestic and indestructible monument. This monument is democratic, republican Russia and, victoriously completing the task of the liberation of the working class, a strong, stalwart, well-organised revolutionary Social-Democratic Labour Party.

Pravda, 6 (23)
March, 1917,
Petrograd

Our Tasks
May 1917

A serious task of great responsibility now faces the working men and women of our country. We must build the 'new Russia', a Russia in which the working people, office workers, servants, day workers, needlewomen and those who are simply the wives of working men, will have a better and brighter life than they had during the accursed reign of bloody Nicholas.

However, the task of winning and consolidating state power for the proletariat and the small peasant, of introducing and implementing such legislation as will limit the appetites of capitalist exploiters and defend the interests of workers, is not the only task now facing the working men and women of Russia. The proletariat of Russia now occupies a special position vis-à-vis the working men and women of other countries.

The great Russian revolution has placed us, Russian working men and women, in the front ranks of those fighting for the world-wide workers' cause, for the interests of all workers.

We are able to speak, write and act more freely than the working women and men of other countries.

How, then, can we not use this freedom, won for us by the blood of our comrades, to concentrate our forces, the forces of the women of the working class, without delay in order to conduct a tireless, insistent mass struggle to achieve the quickest possible end to world war?

Our women comrades, the working women of other countries, are waiting for us to take this step.

War is now the most dreadful evil hanging over us. While the war continues we cannot build the new Russia, cannot resolve the problem of bread, of food, cannot halt the rising cost of living. While, with every hour that passes, the war continues to kill and cripple our children and husbands, we, the women of the working class, cannot know peace!...

If our first task is to help our comrades build the new, democratic Russia, our second task, no less urgent, and closer to our hearts, is to rouse working women to declare war on war.

And this means: firstly, not only to ourselves understand that this is not our war, that it is being waged in the name of the pecuniary interests of the wealthy bosses, bankers and manufacturers, but also to constantly explain this to our working comrades both women and men.

Secondly, it means uniting the forces of working women and men around that party which not only defends the interests of the Russian proletariat, but is also fighting to ensure that proletarian blood is not shed for the glory of capitalists.

Comrade women workers! We can no longer resign ourselves to war and rising prices! We must fight. Join our ranks, the ranks of the Social-Democratic Labour Party! However, it is not enough to join the party. If we really want to hasten peace, then working men and women must fight to ensure that state power is transferred from the hands of big capitalists – the ones really responsible for all our woes, all the blood being shed on battlefields – to the hands of our representatives, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

In the struggle against war and rising prices, in the struggle to secure power in Russia for the dispossessed, for the working people, in the struggle for a new order and new laws, much depends on us, the women workers. The days are passed when the success of the workers' cause depended only on the organisation of the men. Now, as a result of this war, there has been a sharp change in the position of working-class women. Female labour can now be found everywhere. War has forced women to take jobs that before they would never have thought of. Whereas in 1912 there were only 45 women for every 100 men working in factories, now it is not uncommon to find 100 women for every 75 men.

The success of the workers' cause, the success of the workers' struggle for a better life – for a shorter working day, for higher pay, for health insurance, unemployment pay, old-age pensions, etc. – the success of their struggle to defend the work of our children, to obtain better schools, now depends not only on the consciousness and organisation of the men, but also on the number of women workers entering

the ranks of the organised working class. The more of us enter the ranks of the organised fighters for our common workers' cause and needs, the sooner we will win concessions from the capitalist extortionists.

All our strength, all our hope, lies in organisation!

Now our slogan must be: comrade women workers! Do not stand in isolation. Isolated, we are but straws that any boss can bend to his will, but organised we are a mighty force that no one can break.

We, the women workers, were the first to raise the Red Banner in the days of the Russian revolution,[40] the first to go out onto the streets on Women's Day. Let us now hasten to join the leading ranks of the fighters for the workers' cause, let us join trade unions, the Social-Democratic Party, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies!

Our ranks united, we will aim at rapidly putting an end to bloody war among the nations; we will oppose all who have forgotten the great working-class precept of unity, of solidarity among the workers of every country.

It is only in revolutionary struggle against the capitalists of every country, and only in union with the working women and men of the whole world, that we will achieve a new and brighter future – the socialist brotherhood of the workers.

Magazine *Rabotnitsa*
(Woman Worker),
Petrograd, 1917, No. 1-2,
pp. 3-4

Lenin at Smolny
[October-November 1917]

If I were asked what was the greatest, the most memorable moment of my life, I would answer without any hesitation: it was when Soviet power was proclaimed.

Nothing could compare to the pride and joy that filled us as we heard pronounced from the tribune of the Second Congress of Soviets at Smolny the simple and impressive words of the historic resolution:

"All power has passed to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies!"

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was unforgettable at that moment! He proclaimed the famous first decrees of Soviet power – the Decree on Peace and the Decree on Land. His penetrating, energetic and thoughtful gaze was fixed on the future – he saw that which we could not yet see: these decrees translated into reality, the future which we still had to attain.

It was amazing and unforgettable, this inspired concentration of Vladimir Ilyich as he stood on the platform of the presidium of the first Soviet legislative assembly as the Bolsheviks, in the first few hours after taking power, began socialist construction, the construction of a new world.

...Vladimir Ilyich arrived at Smolny on the night of 25 October (7 November). He arrived from Lesnoye where, on the instructions of the party, he had been hiding from Kerensky's bloodhounds.

The following day, Lenin set off openly to attend the conference of the Petrograd Soviet.

Some comrades tried to restrain Lenin, to prevent him from taking the risk of appearing openly in the Soviet. Those who lived through these moments will never forget this tense anxiety on Lenin's behalf.

But the days of underground life were over. Lenin refused to listen to the words of precaution. He did not even try to

persuade us otherwise, but hurried into the White Hall where the Soviet was in conference.

Lenin understood better than we did the mood of the proletarian masses in the towns and villages, the mood of the soldiers at the front. He knew that they were waiting for him, waiting for his decisive speech.

And there was Lenin, at the door of the conference hall.

A whisper of voices rippled through the room: 'Lenin!' For a long time the enthusiastic applause of the deputies prevented him from speaking.

Lenin made an extraordinarily powerful speech that literally electrified the will of the Soviet's deputies...

On coming out of the conference hall, Lenin turned to us with gentle irony:

'You see how the deputies responded. And still you were uncertain.' And he shook his head reproachfully, glancing sideways at his zealous bodyguards, his eyes gleaming. Lenin had taken direct leadership of the uprising into his own hands.

I remember the room at Smolny whose windows looked out onto the river Neva. It was a dark, October evening, and a blustery wind blew fitfully from the river. An electric bulb shed its dim light over a small square table, around which were gathered the members of the Central Committee elected at the Sixth Party Congress. Someone brought a few glasses of hot tea.

Lenin was here, among us, and we were cheerful and certain of our victory. Lenin was calm, resolute. His instructions, his movements, had that clarity and force that one finds in a very experienced captain guiding his ship through a storm. And this storm was like no other–the storm of the great socialist revolution...

Soon afterwards we heard the volley fired by the *Avrora*.

It was my happiness and great honour to work with Lenin in the first Soviet government as People's Commissar for State Welfare.

During the first weeks of its existence, the Council of People's Commissars* met at Smolny, on the second floor, in the corner room known as 'Lenin's study'.

The conditions in which the Sovnarkom held its meetings

* The government of Soviet Russia. Abbreviations: Sovnarkom, SNK.

were extremely Spartan, even more than Spartan, so that it was difficult to work. Lenin's table was pushed up against the wall, and an electric bulb hung just above it. We, the members of the Sovnarkom, sat around Vladimir Ilyich, some of us behind him. Nearer to the windows stood the table of N. P. Gorbunov, the Sovnarkom secretary who took the minutes of the meetings. Every time Lenin gave the floor to someone, or made a comment to Gorbunov, he had to turn round. Yet no one thought of moving the table into a more convenient position. Everyone was busy with important matters, and no one had time to think of his own convenience!

Let me give one example that vividly illustrates the life-style of the Sovnarkom members, and of Lenin himself, in those hectic days.

The incident I am about to describe occurred shortly after the closing session of the Second Congress of Soviets. Some Swedish comrades from Stockholm had sent Vladimir Ilyich and myself (I had worked in Sweden during my political exile) some Dutch cheeses in memory of times past. This present could not have been better timed. I remember how, once, after a fierce political debate with Socialist-Revolutionaries at a meeting, I suddenly felt faint.

'Are you ill, Comrade Kollontai?' asked one of the Red Guards, holding me up.

'No,' I answered. 'I am just hungry.'

The Red Guard immediately offered me a rouble 'to buy a bit of bread', and when I refused, he found out my address, brought the bread himself and left without leaving his name.

Thus I confess that I was happy to be able to offer some cheese to Vladimir Ilyich. The head of government was as undernourished as we were.

Just before a Sovnarkom meeting I showed the round, red Dutch cheeses to Vladimir Ilyich. He was immediately concerned that we should have our share.

'They must be divided up among you all. And don't forget Gorbunov. Will you see to it, please.'

Lenin went into his study, and I spread out a newspaper on the table in the adjoining room, found a knife and began to cut up the cheese to give the comrades for supper.

However, my presence was required at the Sovnarkom meeting. I went, leaving the knife and the cheese on the table. As was often the case in those days, the meeting went on until late at night, and I forgot about the cheese. When

I returned, the cheese was no longer there. The knife and the newspaper were still on the table, but no cheese, not even a crumb... The guard at the door had changed many times during the day. The portions of cheese had been taken by the guards on duty as part of their rations, and it was not surprising that in the course of the day it had been distributed among their comrades.

I went into Lenin's study where he and Gorbunov were checking the minutes. (This was standard practice with Lenin, and every day we learned from him to be most thorough and accurate in our work.)

'What has happened?' asked Lenin. I told him, and he burst out laughing.

'Well, was the cheese good?' he asked with a frank smile. 'You didn't taste it? That's a pity. However, it doesn't really matter: if we don't eat it, others will.'

Lenin's eyes shone with a warm, gentle smile, an unforgettable expression which seemed to say: Well, if the People's Commissars didn't get any cheese for supper, at least the soldiers or the workers did – and quite right too!

And Lenin went back to the minutes, to the current business of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars.

The great man continued his enormous task of creating the first Soviet state in the world, a task that constitutes an immortal page in the history of mankind.

Reminiscences
of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin,
In 5 volumes, Vol. 2,
Politizdat,
Moscow, 1969,
pp. 456-459

Women Fighters in the Days of the Great October Revolution

November 1927

[*1917*]

The women who took part in the Great October Revolution – who were they? Isolated individuals? No, there were hosts of them; tens, hundreds of thousands of nameless heroines who, marching side by side with the workers and peasants behind the Red Flag and the slogan of the Soviets, passed over the ruins of tsarist theocracy into a new future...

If one looks back into the past, one can see them, these masses of nameless heroines whom October found living in starving cities, in impoverished villages plundered by war... A scarf on their head (very rarely, as yet, a red kerchief), a worn skirt, a patched winter jacket... Young and old, women workers and soldiers' wives peasant women and housewives from among the city poor. More rarely, much more rarely in those days, office workers and women in the professions, educated and cultured women. But there were also women from the intelligentsia among those who carried the Red Flag to the October victory – teachers, office employees, young students at high schools and universities, women doctors. They marched cheerfully, selflessly, purposefully. They went wherever they were sent. To the front? They put on a soldier's cap and became fighters in the Red Army. If they put on red arm-bands, then they were hurrying off to the first-aid stations to help the Red front against Kerensky at Gatchina.* They worked in army communications. They worked cheerfully, filled with the belief that something momentous was happening, and that we are all small cogs in the one class of revolution.

In the villages, the peasant women (their husbands had been sent off to the front) took the land from the landowners and chased the aristocracy out of the nests they had roosted in for centuries.

When one recalls the events of October, one sees not

* Gatchina – a suburb of Petrograd (now Leningrad).

individual faces but masses. Masses without number, like waves of humanity. But wherever one looks one sees women – at meetings, gatherings, demonstrations...

They are still not sure what exactly it is they want, what they are striving for, but they know one thing: they will put up with war no longer. Nor do they want the landowners and the wealthy... In the year of 1917, the great ocean of humanity heaves and sways, and a large part of that ocean is made up of women...

Some day the historian will write about the deeds of these nameless heroines of the revolution who died at the front, were shot by the Whites and bore the countless deprivations of the first years following the revolution, but who continued to bear aloft the Red Banner of Soviet power and communism.

It is to these nameless heroines, who died to win a new life for working people during the Great October Revolution, to whom the young republic now bows in recognition as its young people, cheerful and enthusiastic, set about building the basis of socialism.

However, out of this sea of women's heads in scarves and worn caps there inevitably emerge the figures of those to whom the historian will devote particular attention when, many years from now, he writes about the Great October Revolution and its leader, Lenin.

The first figure to emerge is that of Lenin's faithful companion, Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, wearing her plain grey dress and always striving to remain in the background. She would slip unnoticed into a meeting and place herself behind a pillar, but she saw and heard everything, observing all that happened so that she could then give a full account to Vladimir Ilyich, add her own apt comments and light upon a sensible, suitable and useful idea.

In those days Nadezhda Konstantinovna did not speak at the numerous stormy meetings at which the people argued over the great question: would the Soviets win power or not? But she worked tirelessly as Vladimir Ilyich's right hand, occasionally making a brief but telling comment at party meetings. In moments of greatest difficulty and danger, when many stronger comrades lost heart and succumbed to doubt, Nadezhda Konstantinovna remained always the same, totally convinced of the rightness of the cause and of its certain victory. She radiated unshakable faith, and this staunchness of spirit, concealed behind a rare modesty, always had

a cheering effect upon all who came into contact with the companion of the great leader of the October Revolution.

Another figure emerges–that of yet another faithful companion of Vladimir Ilyich, a comrade-in-arms during the difficult years of underground work, secretary of the Party Central Committee, Yelena Dmitriyevna Stassova. A clear, high brow, a rare precision in, and an exceptional capacity for work, a rare ability to 'spot' the right person for the job. Her tall, statuesque figure could be seen first at the Soviet at the Tavrichesky palace,* then at the house of Kshesinskaya,** and finally at Smolny. In her hands she holds a notebook, while around her press comrades from the front, workers, Red Guards, women workers, members of the party and of the Soviets, seeking a quick, clear answer or order.

Stassova carried responsibility for many important matters, but if a comrade faced need or distress in those stormy days, she would always respond, providing a brief, seemingly curt answer, and herself doing anything she could. She was overwhelmed with work, and always at her post. Always at her post, yet never pushing forward to the front row, to prominence. She did not like to be the centre of attention. Her concern was not for herself, but for the cause.

For the noble and cherished cause of communism, for which Yelena Stassova suffered exile and imprisonment in tsarist jails, leaving her with broken health... In the name of the cause she was like flint, as hard as steel. But to the sufferings of her comrades she displayed a sensitivity and responsiveness that are found only in a woman with a warm and noble heart.

Klavdia Nikolayeva was a working woman of very humble origins. She had joined the Bolsheviks as early as 1908, in the years of reaction, and had endured exile and imprisonment... In 1917 she returned to Leningrad and became the heart of the first magazine for working women, *Kommunistka*. She was still young, full of fire and impatience. But she held the banner firmly, and boldly declared that women workers, soldiers' wives and peasant women must be drawn into the

* The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies met at the Tavrichesky palace.

** After the February revolution, the St Petersburg Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) met at the house of the ballerina Kshesinskaya.



Alexandra Kollontai at the Second International Conference of Women Socialists in Copenhagen. August, 1910



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At the International Congress of the Second International. Copenhagen, September, 1910



A poster announcing that Alexandra Kollontai is to address a meeting during her propaganda tour of America. 1915

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At a session of the Council of People's Commissars, attended by Lenin. Petrograd, 1918. (Alexandra Kollontai is sitting to the right of Lenin)

Alexandra Kollontai photographed with homeless children. 1918

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Alexandra Kollontai (top row, centre) with children from a kindergarten, named in her honour.
Kiev, 1919



Alexandra Kollontai in the Ukraine as People's Commissar for Propaganda. 1919

Alexandra Kollontai with delegates to the Second International Conference of Women Communists. 1921





In the presidium of the Second International Conference of Women Communists. Alexandra Kollontai and Clara Zetkin. June, 1921

Alexandra Kollontai speaking at the Second International Conference of Women Communists, 1921





Alexandra Kollontai about to present her credentials to King Haakon VII of Norway. Oslo, September, 1924

Alexandra Kollontai photographed with the President of Mexico, Plutarco Elias Calles, after presenting her credentials. Mexico, 24 December, 1926



Alexandra Kollontai about to present her credentials to King Gustav V of Sweden. Stokholm, 30 October, 1930.

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Alexandra Kollontai photographed after being awarded a Norwegian medal. Moscow, June, 1946



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Alexandra Kollontai at the Soviet diplomatic mission in Stockholm. Sweden





Alexandra Kollontai. January, 1952

party. To work, women! To the defence of the Soviets and communism!

She spoke at meetings, still nervous and unsure of herself, yet attracting others to follow. She was one of those who bore on her shoulders all the difficulties involved in preparing the way for the broad, mass involvement of women in the revolution, one of those who fought on two fronts – for the Soviets and communism, and at the same time for the emancipation of women. The names of Klavdia Nikolayeva and Konkordia Samoilova, who died at her revolutionary post in 1921 (from cholera), are indissolubly linked with the first and most difficult steps taken by the working women's movement, particularly in Leningrad. Konkordia Samoilova was a party worker of unparalleled selflessness, a fine, business-like speaker who knew how to win the hearts of working women. Those who worked alongside her will long remember Konkordia Samoilova. She was simple in manner, simple in dress, demanding in the execution of decisions, strict both with herself and others.

Particularly striking is the gentle and charming figure of Inessa Armand, who was charged with very important party work in preparation for the October Revolution, and who thereafter contributed many creative ideas to the work conducted among women. With all her femininity and gentleness of manner, Inessa Armand was unshakable in her convictions and able to defend what she believed to be right, even when faced with redoubtable opponents. After the revolution, Inessa Armand devoted herself to organising the broad movement of working women, and the delegate conference is her creation.

Enormous work was done by Varvara Nikolayevna Yakovleva during the difficult and decisive days of the October Revolution in Moscow. On the battleground of the barricades she showed a resolution worthy of a leader of party headquarters... Many comrades said then that her resolution and unshakable courage gave heart to the wavering and inspired those who had lost heart. 'Forward!' – to victory.

As one recalls the women who took part in the Great October Revolution, more and more names and faces rise up as if by magic from the memory. Could we fail to honour today the memory of Vera Slutskaya, who worked selflessly in preparation for the revolution and who was shot down by Cossaks on the first Red front near Petrograd?

Could we forget Yevgenia Bosh, with her fiery temperament, always eager for battle? She also died at her revolutionary post.

Could we omit to mention here two names closely connected with the life and activity of V. I. Lenin – his two sisters and comrades-in-arms, Anna Ilyinichna Yelizarova and Maria Ilyinichna Ulyanova?

...And comrade Varya, from the railway workshops in Moscow, always lively, always in a hurry? And Fyodorova, the textile worker in Leningrad, with her pleasant, smiling face and her fearlessness when it came to fighting at the barricades?

It is impossible to list them all, and how many remain nameless? The heroines of the October Revolution were a whole army, and although their names may be forgotten, their selflessness lives on in the very victory of that revolution, in all the gains and achievements now enjoyed by working women in the Soviet Union.

It is a clear and indisputable fact that, without the participation of women, the October Revolution could not have brought the Red Flag to victory. Glory to the working women who marched under that Red Banner during the October Revolution. Glory to the October Revolution that liberated women!

Zhensky zhurnal
(The Women's Journal),
No. 11, November, 1927,
pp. 2-3,
abridged

Lenin Thought of Both Great and Small

January 1946

Lenin's ability to think about the great and important, while not forgetting the small details of everyday life, always amazed me. I was amazed that, while engaged in creating a totally new kind of state, he never missed the opportunity to remind us, even in relation to small details, of the fact that the state, and particularly a socialist state, requires account-keeping and order. I will cite one example.

It was December, 1917. Christmas was approaching, but at Smolny no-one was thinking of holidays. We were working non-stop. Winter had still not set in properly, sleet was falling and a cold northerly wind was blowing along the Neva.

Nadezhda Konstantinovna was trying to persuade Vladimir Ilyich to leave town for a few days over Christmas. She argued that he needed a respite from work, he was sleeping badly and was clearly suffering from fatigue. The doctor who ran the Halila sanatorium in Finland, on the Karelian Isthmus, came to see me at the People's Commissariat for Welfare and told me that his sanatorium had a new private residence, warm and well-lit, which he would be more than willing to put at Lenin's disposal. Vladimir Ilyich, however, brushed aside all our arguments. Although we told him that there was a magnificent forest nearby where one could go hunting as much as one wished, Vladimir Ilyich would only answer: 'Hunting is a fine thing, but we have no end of work to do. True, we have already made a start, but even the Bolsheviks cannot organise a new state in two months. That will take ten years at least.' Nadezhda Konstantinovna interrupted him: 'What? Does that mean you are going to spend all those years sitting at your desk without a break?' 'Well, we'll see how things are later on,' was Lenin's reply.

However, a few days later it occurred to Vladimir Ilyich that if he went away for a few days, he would manage to

write a complete new work that he could not find time for at Smolny. This idea so took hold of him that the following morning he said to Nadezhda Konstantinovna: 'If Kollontai at the People's Commissariat really does have a private residence in a forest where no one will disturb me, then I am willing to go.'

On the morning of 24 December I went to the Finlyandsky Station to see Vladimir Ilyich off. He, Nadezhda Konstantinovna and Maria Ilyinichna had only just got into their compartment. Vladimir Ilyich sat beside the window, right in the corner of the carriage, in order to be less noticeable. Maria Ilyinichna sat beside him, and Nadezhda Konstantinovna sat opposite. Vladimir Ilyich thought it would be safer if he went in an ordinary passenger compartment with two Red Army soldiers and a trusted Finnish comrade.

Vladimir Ilyich was wearing his old autumn coat that he had been wearing when he came back from abroad, and also, despite the keen frost, a felt hat. A comrade carrying three fur-coats and a fur hat with earflaps followed me into the compartment. 'You can put these on,' I said to Vladimir Ilyich, 'when you have to cross open fields in a horse-drawn sleigh, for then, naturally, it will be very cold, and it is a long way from the station to the sanatorium. The fur-coats, I added, are from the stores of the People's Commissariat.'

'That is evident,' said Vladimir Ilyich, opening one of the fur-coats, on the inside of which was sewn the number of the storehouse and the item. 'I suppose you did this so that we should not leave the coats behind? State goods like book-keeping, and that is as it should be.'

Vladimir Ilyich wanted me to go with them, but I was detained by urgent business at the People's Commissariat, mainly the organisation of aid for mothers and young children. I promised to join them later.

Vladimir Ilyich suddenly remembered that he had no Finnish money. 'It would be a help if you could get hold of at least 100 Finnish marks to pay the porter at the station, and to cover any other minor expenses.'

I ran to the currency exchange desk, but I had only a small amount of money with me, not enough to get even 100 Finnish marks.

Vladimir Ilyich said: 'So, the house stands alone and is well-heated, you say, and one can go hunting in the forest. And what if there are hares?' I answered, that I could not

promise hares, but that there were certain to be squirrels. 'Hmm, shooting squirrels is a children's pastime.' Nadezhda Konstantinovna added: 'If Vladimir Ilyich will only go for walks in the forest, and not spend the whole three days sitting at his desk.' 'But there even the air inside will be cleaner,' Vladimir Ilyich interrupted her.

The train started to pull out of the station. No-one else on the platform realised that the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars was travelling as an ordinary 2nd-class passenger.

A few days later, Vladimir Ilyich was back at work at Smolny.

I got a handwritten note from Vladimir Ilyich:

'I thank you for the fur-coats from the stocks of your People's Commissariat, which I return to you safe and sound. They came in very useful, for we were caught in a snowstorm. Halila itself was very pleasant indeed. I am not sending you any Finnish marks as yet, but I have worked out roughly how much it comes to in Russian money – 83 roubles – and I enclose them with this note. I know that you have not got much money to spare. Yours, Lenin.'

It was typical of Vladimir Ilyich that, amidst all his enormous problems of state, he could remember such details and always find time to be an attentive comrade.

From the book A. Kollontai,
Reminiscences of Lenin,
Politizdat, Moscow, 1971

Why the Bolsheviks Must Win

December 1917

A great and long-awaited event which we Marxists always believed to be inevitable, but which we nonentheless viewed rather as a dream or an ideal of the future rather than as an imminent reality, has at last occurred.[41]

The Russian proletariat, supported by armed soldiers – and they too are the sons of proletarians or peasants – have seized state power. For the first time in the history of man a state is headed not by the representatives of capital, of the bourgeoisie, but by the vanguard of the fighting proletariat – the left wing of Russian Social-Democracy, the Bolsheviks.

As far back as the February revolution, in Russia, the Bolsheviks realised the inevitability of a clash between the working class, supported by an exhausted peasantry and soldiers wearied to death of war, and the Russian bourgeoisie.

All that the February revolution of 1917 achieved was the overthrow of tsarism and the introduction of those commonly accepted political rights and freedoms recognised by any liberal-bourgeois government (freedom of association and the press, the right to coalition and alliance). The old, bureaucratic, bourgeois spirit that reigned over life in Russia remained unchanged. The former officials remained in all the ministries, the former laws and regulations continued to operate throughout the land, and the only difference was that the former monarchists became the faithful servants first of Milyukov and Guchkov, and then of Kerensky and Tereshchenko.

The major capitalists and industrialists in Russia thought that after the February revolution the danger was past, and that after the overthrow of the tsarist regime, capitalists in Russia would have full freedom of action in order to create in Russia a purely capitalist republic similar to the one in Northern America, where all state power is firmly in the hands of capitalist magnates. Only this summer the Russian bourgeoisie celebrated its victory, and sought by every kind of political intrigue and deceit (and in particular by the formation of a coalition government) to strengthen its position

and weaken that of the socialists. It sought to buy over wavering social-patriots such as Tsereteli, Chernov and Avksentyev by promising them a share in government.

At that time there existed in Russia only one party which, from the very beginning of the February revolution, adopted a negative attitude towards the bourgeois-imperialist policies of the Cadets* and social-patriots – *and that was the Bolshevik Party.* As far back as April the Bolsheviks put forward the slogan 'All power to the Soviets!', and repeatedly emphasised that it was essential to end the war. However, the war could only be ended by revolution and the overthrow of the bourgeois-capitalist government. Therefore, anyone who wanted to fight for peace had, at the same time, to fight *to seize power.* The more resolutely the Bolsheviks supported these slogans, the more savagely they were attacked by their political opponents, by the Cadets and their lackeys from the socialist party – the social-patriots. But the Bolsheviks calmly continued their work, fulfilling their great historical mission.

The Bolsheviks not only found themselves in opposition, flaying the social-patriots and ceaselessly criticising and exposing the harmful essence of imperialism both within and without Russia, but they also sought energetically and persistently to create a basis for the development of a revolutionary workers' movement that would be supported by the popular masses and would not hesitate before open and armed insurrection.

In Petrograd, Moscow and throughout Russia large trade unions were formed with 100 to 200 thousand members (metal workers, textile workers, wood workers, etc.). Then under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, workers' and soldiers' clubs were set up with their own libraries, study courses, cheap canteens, etc. At the same time, the first steps were taken to organise a union of socialist youth, whose membership reached 50 thousand. The Bolsheviks also did a great deal of work among the soldiers at the front in order to strengthen the spirit of internationalism there also. Millions of copies of pamphlets and brochures were distributed which openly set out the problem of war as understood by socialist-internationalists. Bolshevik-led meetings, congresses and conferences were also called for the same purpose.

However, if the Bolsheviks prepared the way for the October

* The Constitutional-Democratic Party or the party of 'people's freedom', the main party of the Russian liberal-monarchical bourgeoisie, which adopted a counter-revolutionary position.

Revolution by means of active propaganda and organisational work, it must not be forgotten that it was *the objective conditions themselves which created the ground for this second revolution.*

The February revolution could remove none of the factors which caused it, namely war, rising prices, famine and privation. At the same time, the Russian bourgeoisie calmly continued their rule.

In July the reactionary trend in the policy of the bourgeoisie (the Cadets) was becoming increasingly obvious. The workers' press was banned, Bolsheviks were arrested, and the death penalty was reintroduced for soldiers.

Then came the notorious plot between General Kornilov and the Cadet leaders. From September onwards there were signs of an approaching and increasingly bitter struggle between revolutionary democracy and the liberal bourgeoisie. Now the question was: to whom should republican Russia belong – to the capitalists, or to the workers and poor peasants? The soldiers, weary to death of war, were inclining more and more towards the Bolsheviks, while the Kerensky government was increasingly aggressive...

The dictatorship of the bourgeois parties, or the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat – that was the question facing the Second Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies which met in Petrograd on 25 October (old style).[42]

The people came out victorious without either a hard struggle or much bloodshed. The Soviets of Workers took power into their hands. Not one soldier, not one sailor, not one worker supported the government of Kerensky. Only individual groups from the bourgeois camp supported the government. The Congress of Soviets declared: that which we have waited for so long has happened – state power is in the hands of revolutionary democracy, i. e. in the hands of the workers, the poor peasants, the soldiers and sailors! As was to be expected, the first step taken by a truly socialist government was the proclamation of the Decree on Peace.

The People's Commissars immediately set about implementing the programme of the working class. A new spirit emerged. All the old bureaucratic methods and customs were swept away. Self-administration and the principle of election came into operation throughout the country for all posts, including those in the armed forces (even commanders are elected and appointed by the soldiers). All of this is now characteristic of life in Russia.

The new socialist government, the government of workers and peasants, is now taking energetic measures to restore the national economy, finances and industry, which have been totally destroyed. However, even more could have been achieved if it had not been for the bourgeoisie, which looked with hatred and anger at the rule of the 'mob' and did all it could to impede the new work of creation. One example of this is the notorious 'sabotage' by state employees in all the ministries, in state institutions, and even in schools and hospitals. Teachers, doctors, journalists, the whole of the intelligentsia, opposed the workers, the socialist state. As soon as a People's Commissar took office, all state employees immediately, like experienced strikers, stopped work, leaving ministries and other institutions empty. Many schools and hospitals had to be closed as a result of strikes among the teaching and medical staff.

The elderly and orphans were thrown out of the refuges where they had found shelter because the staff refused to accept money to support these institutions from a 'socialist Bolshevik government'!...

Often, when the staff left the ministries, they took with them not only all the documents, but also the keys of the safes and all the money.

Is it therefore surprising that the socialist government, faced with such an unprecedented boycott and sabotage, affecting so adversely innocent members of society, adopted rigorous measures against Cadets and liberals?

However, despite all these difficulties, the Bolshevik government continued its constructive work. Radical social reforms were implemented. Concern was shown for the poorest and most deprived members of the population. Particular care was shown towards those injured during the war. A campaign was mounted against unemployment. Reforms were also carried through in the administration of justice. Severe measures were taken against speculation. Particular attention was paid to school education, and efforts were made to deal with the housing crisis.

It is not at all surprising, therefore, if such policies defending the interests of the masses provoke different reactions to the socialist government among different sections of society. On the one hand, the socialist government faces the hatred, slander and anger of the whole bourgeois class, while, on the other hand, it arouses admiration, genuine devotion and resolute support amongst the workers, soldiers and peasants.

Revolutionary democracy clearly understands and feels that the Bolshevik government is the only correct organ of power for new, democratic Russia. Either Russia will become a bourgeois-capitalist republic (should the Cadets come to power), or under the leadership of the proletariat, it will develop as a purely democratic republic and will gradually create new forms for the national economy and social relations.

Following the October Revolution in Russia, the slogan 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' is no longer a utopia but a reality which all the burgeois classes in other countries must reckon with. The Russian revolution marked only the beginning of the great struggle to liberate the proletariat from the yoke of capitalism. It is of vital importance for the proletariat of every country that the Bolsheviks should emerge from this struggle victorious. This victory will also deal a lethal blow to world imperialism.

Revolt, December, 1917

What Are We Fighting For?

May 1919

This is a question that disturbs many, the question that faces the Red Army and the workers, and troubles the peasants. Did not the Communist-Bolsheviks, two years ago, summon us in the name of peace? Why does war continue? Why are we being mobilised yet again and sent to the front?

In order to answer this question one must understand what is happening all around us, the events that are taking place. As soon as the workers and peasants took power into their hands in October, 1917, they honestly and openly offered peace to all the peoples. However, the workers in the other countries were still too weak, and the predatory capitalists were still strong enough to continue the war. In March, 1918, the Soviet government, desirous of peace, signed the disadvantageous and onerous Brest Peace Treaty with Germany[43] in order to return the ploughman to the field, the worker to his lathe, in order to save the lives of its free citizens.

However, the imperialist predators are not afraid of blood, and place no value on human life. They needed war, and therefore the bourgeoisie of every country mounted repeated attacks upon Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine from outside, while inside the country they encouraged kulak action against the workers and peasants. A new battle front took shape – not Russians against Germans or Ukrainians against the allies, but 'Reds' against 'Whites', i.e. the working people against the bourgeoisie.

What else could the people do? Should they say: We are against war, we are for peace, and therefore, if the Kolchaks, Denikins and Krasnovs attack us, we will not take up arms?! Let American, or German or Russian capital rule over us once more and introduce amongst us the system that suits it best – it's all the same to us?![44]

Of course, not one rationally-minded Red Army soldier, worker or peasant would say anything of the kind.

The peasant soon realises: if Skoropadsky returns, together with the priests and the landowners, it will be farewell to land and freedom! Once more it will be doff your cap before the village policeman and starve to death while the landowners' barns burst with golden grain!

The worker would understand that the return to power of the bourgeoisie would mean a return to lack of rights, to the exploitation of labour, the abolition of the 8-hour working day and unemployment benefit, that it would lead to the expulsion of the working people from their light and healthy flats to be chased back into damp cellars. It would mean a return to the slavery of hired labour.

The Red Army soldier would remember the prison-like regime of the tsarist barracks, blows by officers, insult and abuse from commanders of the old order, rotten meat for dinner, theft by military superintendents, and his hands would seek instinctively for his protecting rifle.

All the working people taken as a whole cannot fail to understand that now the question is whether the peasants and workers are to be the masters of Russia and the Ukraine, or whether the priests, landowners and capitalists are to return and hang once more like a millstone around the neck of the people.

This is not war, but the working people rising up in defence of their rights, freedom and very life!

We are fighting not in order to annex new lands or enslave or plunder another people, but in order to safeguard ourselves from the capitalist predators. We are fighting in order to secure for the peasant and his children the possibility of peacefully farming the land, in order to give the worker the possibility not only of working at a factory or plant, but of himself participating in the organisation of production, himself distributing the national wealth in such a way that each gets his just due, rather than one man getting it all simply because he is a capitalist and takes for himself the lion's share of the national wealth.

We are fighting in order to defend the right of the workers and peasants to run their own homeland. We are fighting in order to protect the people against the possible return of famine and rising prices. We are fighting in order to create one, united, international fraternal republic of workers and peasants, destroy private-property owners and the predatory rich, and thus put an end to war once and for all.

Our war–the war of the Reds against the Whites–is the

revolt of the oppressed against those who are responsible for bloodshed. Our cry is and will remain 'War on war! Long live peaceful productive labour on behalf of all working people!'

Bulletin of the Kharkov Soviet
and the Provincial Executive
Committee
of the Soviets of Workers',
Peasants' and Red Army Deputies,
7 May, 1919

On the History of the Movement of Women Workers in Russia

1919

[*1905-1917*]

What year could be said to mark the beginning of the working women's movement in Russia? In its essential nature, the movement of women workers is inseparably linked with the entire proletarian movement as one indivisible whole. The woman worker, as a member of the proletarian class, as someone selling her labour, also rose in revolt with the workers every time they opposed the violation of their human rights, participated together and on an equal footing with the workers in all worker uprisings, in all the 'factory revolts' so hated by tsarism.

For this reason, the beginning of the movement of women workers in Russia coincides with the first signs of the awakening of class self-consciousness among the Russian proletariat, and with its first attempts, by means of combined pressure, strikes and walk-outs, to achieve more tolerable, less humiliating and miserly conditions of existence.

Women workers took active part in the worker revolts at the Krenholm factory in 1872 and at the Lazeryev textile factory in Moscow in 1874. They were involved in the strike in 1878 at the New Cotton-Spinning Plant in Petrograd and led the weavers' strike in the famous workers' demonstration in Orekhovo-Zuyevo, during which factory buildings were wrecked. As a result, the tsarist government was compelled to hurry through its legislation prohibiting night work for women and children, which came into force on 3 June, 1885.

It is indicative that the spontaneous wave of strikes that shook proletarian Russia in the 1870's and the early 1880's affected mainly the textile industry, in which the majority of the work force is made up of cheap female labour. The disturbances of the 1870's and early 1880's occurred for purely economic reasons, provoked by unemployment and the continuing crisis in the cotton industry. However, is it not remarkable that this downtrodden 'factory girl', without rights, oppressed by labour beyond her strength and politically ignorant, despised even by the female half of the

urban petty bourgeoisie and held at arm's length by peasant women who clung tenaciously to old traditions, should be in the front ranks of those fighting for the rights of the working class, for the emancipation of women? The harsh conditions of life itself compelled the factory girl to oppose openly the power of the bosses and the enslavement of capital. However, in fighting for the rights and interests of her class, the woman worker was unwittingly also preparing the way for the emancipation of women from those chains that still weighed upon them in particular and created inequality of status and conditions among men and women workers, even within the framework of one single working class.

During the new and intensified wave of worker disturbances in the mid- and the late 1890's, working women were once again invariably active participants in worker revolts. The April revolt at the Yaroslavl factory in 1895 received vigorous support from the women weavers. Nor were women workers less active than their male comrades during the economic strikes of 1894-1895 in St Petersburg. When, in the summer of 1896, St Petersburg became the scene of the historic strike by textile workers, the women weavers courageously and unanimously walked out of the workshops together with the men weavers. What difference does it make that at home hungry children are waiting for their working mother? What difference does it make that this strike brings with it the threat of dismissal, of exile or prison? The common class cause is more important, more sacred than maternal feelings, concern for the family, for personal and family well-being!

At a time of disturbances and strikes the woman worker, oppressed, timid, without rights, straightens up to her full height and becomes equal as a fighter and comrade. This transformation takes place unconsciously, spontaneously, but it is important and significant. It is the path along which the workers' movement is leading the woman worker to liberation, not only as one who sells her labour, but also as a woman, a wife, a mother and a housewife.

At the end of the 1890's and the beginning of the 20th century there were a number of disturbances and strikes at factories employing mainly women: at tobacco-processing factories (Shanshal), at spinning and weaving mills (Maxwell) in Petrograd, etc. The working-class movement in Russia is gaining strength, organising itself, taking shape. So also is class resistance among the female proletariat.

Nonetheless, until the momentous year of the first Russian revolution[45] the movement was basically economic in nature. Political slogans had to be concealed or advanced in disguised form. A healthy class instinct prompts the woman worker to support strikes, and not infrequently the women themselves organise and carry through 'factory revolts'. However, no sooner had the wave of bitter strike struggle passed, no sooner had the workers returned to work, victorious or defeated, than the women were once again isolated from one another, still unconscious of the need for organisation, for constant comradely contact. In those years it was still exceptional to find a woman worker in the illegal party organisations. The broad objectives of the socialist workers' party had still not seized hold of the working woman, and she remained unresponsive to universal political slogans. The life led by six million proletarian women in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century was still too dark, too unenlightened, and their existence too much in the grip of hunger, deprivation and humiliation. A 12-hour, or at best an 11-hour working day, a starvation wage of 12-15 roubles a month, accommodation in overcrowded barracks, the absence of any form of assistance from the state or society in case of illness, pregnancy or unemployment, the impossibility of organising self-help as the tsarist government savagely persecuted any attempts at organisation by the workers – these were the conditions surrounding the woman worker. Her back was bent by the intolerable burden of oppression, and her soul, terrified by the spectre of poverty and starvation, refused to believe in a brighter future and the possibility of fighting to cast off the yoke of tsarism and capital.

At the beginning of the 20th century, women workers avoided politics and revolutionary struggle. The socialist movement in Russia can, it is true, take pride in an abundance of charming and heroic women who, by their energetic work and selflessness, helped to consolidate the underground movement and prepared the way for the revolutionary explosion that occurred in the years that followed. However none of these women, from the first women socialists such as Sofia Bardina or the Leshern sisters, full of charm and inner beauty, to the iron-willed Sofia Perovskaya, were representatives of the female proletariat. In the majority of cases these were the young girls to which Turgenev dedicated his prose poem 'The Threshold',

girls from a wealthy, aristocratic background who left their parental homes, broke with their prosperous past and 'went to the people' to spread revolutionary propaganda and fight against social injustice, striving to redeem the 'sins of their fathers'. Even much later, in the 1890's and the beginning of the 20th century, when Marxism had already put down deep roots in the Russian workers' movement, the number of women workers involved in the movement was very small. The active women members of the underground organisations in those years were not women workers but women from the intelligentsia – students, teachers, medical assistants and writers. It was rare to find a 'factory girl' at an illegal meeting. Nor did the women workers attend the Sunday evening classes held just outside the city limits of Petrograd, which were then the only legal method of spreading, under the innocent guise of geography or arithmetic, the ideas of Marxism and scientific socialism among the broad working masses. Working women still fought shy of life, avoided combat ...still believed that their lot was the oven, the wash-tub and the cradle.

THE FIRST REVOLUTION OF 1905

The picture changes radically from the moment when the red spectre of revolution first overshadowed Russia with its fiery wings. The revolutionary year of 1905 sent deep shock waves through the working masses. The Russian worker sensed his strength for the first time, for the first time realised that he was bearing on his shoulders the whole national wealth. The Russian proletarian woman worker, the unfailing collaborator in all the political demonstrations of the proletariat in the revolutionary years of 1905-1906, was also awoken from her slumbers. She was to be found everywhere. If we wanted to relate the facts of the mass participation of women in the movement of the time, enumerate all the active manifestations of protest and struggle by women workers, recall all the selfless actions undertaken by proletarian women, their loyalty to the ideals of socialism, then we would have to reconstruct scene by scene the entire history of the Russian revolution of 1905.

Many still remember those years full of romanticism. The image of the woman worker, still 'incomplete', but already stirring into life, with her searching, hope-filled eyes turned on the speaker at crowded meetings charged with infectious

enthusiasm, lives once again in the memory. The faces of women, filled with concentrated energy and unshakable resolution, can be seen among the serried ranks of the workers' procession on the memorable 9 January, bloody Sunday. A sun, unusually bright for St Petersburg, illuminates this purposeful, solemn and silent procession, highlighting the women's faces, so numerous among the crowd. The penalty for naive illusions and childish trustfulness strikes the women; the woman worker, young girl, working wife, is a common figure among the mass victims of that January day. The slogan 'General Strike' that flies from workshop to workshop is picked up by these women, yesterday still lacking class consciousness, and compels some of them to be the first to walk out.

The women workers in the provinces did not lag behind their comrades in the capital. In the October days, exhausted by work and their harsh existence on the edge of starvation, women leave the factories and, in the name of the common cause, courageously deprive their children of their last piece of bread... With simple, moving words the woman worker appeals to her male comrades, suggesting that they too leave their work; she keeps up the spirits of those on strike, breathing energy into those who waver... The woman worker struggled tirelessly, protested courageously, sacrificed herself heroically for the common cause, and the more active she became, the more rapidly was the process of her mental awakening achieved. The woman worker began to take note of the world around her, of the injustices stemming from the capitalist system. She became more painfully and acutely aware of the bitterness of all her sufferings and sorrows. Alongside common proletarian demands one can hear ever more distinctly the voices of the women of the working class recalling the needs and requirements of women workers. At the time of the elections to the Shidlovsky commission in March, 1905,[46] the refusal to admit women as worker delegates provoked murmurs of discontent among women: the sufferings and sacrifices that they had only recently passed through had brought the men and women of the working class closer together, put them on an equal footing. It appeared particularly unjust at that moment to turn to the woman fighter and citizen and underline her age-old lack of rights. When the Shidlovsky commission refused to recognise the woman chosen as one of the seven delegates from the Sampsoniyevsky textile works, the indignant women workers

representing several textile works decided to present to the commission the following protest declaration: 'Women deputies representing women workers are not allowed onto the commission under your chairmanship. We believe such a decision to be unjust. Women workers predominate in the factories and mills of St Petersburg. The number of women employed in spinning and weaving mills is increasing every year because the men are moving to factories that offer better pay. We, the women workers, bear a heavier burden of work. Because of our helplessness and lack of rights, we are kept down more by our comrades, and paid less. When this commission was announced, our hearts filled with hope; at last the time is coming–we thought–when the woman worker in St Petersburg will be able to speak out to the whole of Russia in the name of all her sister workers about the oppression, wrongs and humiliations of which the male worker can know nothing. And then, when we had already chosen our deputies, we were informed that only men can be deputies. However, we hope that this is not your final decision...'

The refusal to allow women workers the right of representation and their expulsion from political life constituted a blatant injustice for all that section of the female population that had carried on its shoulders the burden of the liberation struggle. Women workers repeatedly attended pre-election meetings during the election campaigns for the First[47] and Second Dumas[48], and noisily protested against a law that deprived them of any voice in a matter so important as the election of a representative to the Russian parliament. There were instances, for example in Moscow, when women workers came to meetings of electors, broke up the meeting and protested against the way the elections were being conducted.

That women workers were no longer indifferent to their lack of rights is also shown by the fact that, of the 40,000 signatures on petitions addressed to the First and Second State Dumas demanding that electoral rights be extended to women also, a large majority were those of women workers. The collection of signatures was organised by the Alliance for Female Equality and other bourgeois women's organisations, and was conducted at plants and factories. The fact that women workers willingly signed petitions drawn up by bourgeois women also reveals that the political consciousness of women workers was only just awakening, that they were

taking their first, hesitant steps, still stopping half-way. The women workers were becoming aware of their deprivation and lack of political rights, but were still unable to link this fact with the common struggle of their own class, were unable to find the correct path that would lead proletarian women to their full and comprehensive emancipation. The woman worker still naively accepted the hand held out to her by bourgeois feminists. The suffragettes turned to the working women, hoping to draw them onto their side, get their support and organise them into purely feminine, supposedly non-class, but essentially bourgeois alliances. However, a healthy class instinct and a deep mistrust of the 'fine ladies' saved women workers from being attracted to feminism and prevented any long or stable fraternisation with bourgeois suffragettes.

The years 1905 and 1906 were marked by a particularly large number of women's meetings eagerly attended by women workers. The women workers listened carefully to the voice of the bourgeois suffragettes, but what was offered to them did not satisfy the urgent needs of those enslaved to capital, and did not evoke any whole-hearted response. The women of the working class were exhausted by the burden of intolerable working conditions, hunger and the material insecurity of their families; their immediate demands were: a shorter working day, higher pay, a more humane attitude on the part of the factory administration, less police surveillance, more freedom of action. All these demands were alien to bourgeois feminism. The suffragettes approached the women workers with narrowly feminine causes and aspirations. They did not and could not understand the class nature of the emerging women workers' movement. They were particularly disappointed by the domestic servants. On the initiative of the bourgeois feminists, the first meetings of domestic servants were held in St Petersburg and Moscow in 1905. The domestic servants eagerly responded to this call to 'organise' and turned up at the early meetings in large numbers. However, when the Alliance for Female Equality tried to organise them to its own taste, i.e. to set up an idyllic, mixed alliance between lady employers and domestic employees, the domestic servants turned away from the suffragettes and, to the disappointment of the bourgeois ladies, 'hastened to join their own class party, organising their own special trade unions'. Such is the state of affairs in Moscow, Vladimir, Penza, Kharkov and a number of other cities. The

same fate befell attempts by another political women's organisation even more to the right, the Women's Progressive Party, which attempted to organise domestic employees under the watchful eye of their mistresses. The domestic servants' movement overflowed the boundaries predetermined for it by the feminists. Look at the newspapers from 1905 and you will see that they abound in reports of direct action by domestic servants, even in the most remote regions of Russia. This action took the form either of mass strike action, or of street demonstrations. The strikes involved cooks, laundresses and maids; there were strikes according to profession, and strikes that united all 'domestic servants'. This protest by domestic employees spread like an infection from place to place. The demands made by the domestic servants were usually limited to an 8-hour working day, a minimum wáge, more tolerable living conditions (a separate room), polite treatment by the employer, etc.

This political awakening of women was, moreover, not limited to the urban poor. For the first time in Russia, the Russian peasant woman also raised her voice persistently and resolutely. The end of 1904 and the whole of 1905 is a period of continuous 'petticoat rebellions', sparked off by the war against Japan. All the horrors and deprivations, all the social and economic ills that stemmed from this ill-fated war, weighed down on the peasant woman, wife and mother. The conscription of reserves placed a double burden of work and worry on her already overloaded shoulders, and forced her, hitherto dependent and fearful of everything that lay beyond the circle of her domestic interests, to meet face to face previously unsuspected hostile forces, and to become consciously aware of all her humiliation and deprivation, drain to the last drop the whole bitter cup of unmerited wrongs... Illiterate, downtrodden peasant women left their homes and villages for the first time and hurried into town to wear down the steps of government offices in the attempt to obtain some news of their husbands, sons, and fathers, to petition for financial assistance and defend their interests... The total lack of rights that was the peasant's lot, the lies and injustice of the existing social order, stood in all their naked ugliness before the bewildered peasant woman... She returned from town sober and hardened, bearing in her heart an inexhaustible supply of bitterness, hatred and anger... In the summer of 1905 a whole series of 'petticoat rebellions' broke out in the south. Filled with anger and with a boldness

surprising for women, the peasant women attacked military and police headquarters where the army recruits were stationed, seized their menfolk and took them home. Armed with rakes, pitchforks and brooms, peasant women drove the armed guards from the villages. They are protesting in their own way against the intolerable burden of war. They are, of course, arrested, tried and given severe punishments, but the 'petticoat rebellions' continue. In this protest, defence of peasant interests and of purely 'female' interests are so closely interwoven that there are no grounds for dividing them and classing the 'petticoat rebellions' as part of the 'feminist movement'.

Following the 'political demonstrations' by the peasant women there come a series of 'petticoat rebellions' on economic grounds. This is the period of universal peasant unrest and agricultural strikes. The 'petticoats' sometimes initiated these disturbances, drawing the men after them. There were cases when, having failed to involve the men, the women marched to the manors by themselves to present their demands and ultimata. Arming themselves with whatever came to hand, they went ahead of the men to meet the punitive detachments. The downtrodden peasant woman, oppressed for centuries, suddenly became one of the central figures in the political drama. During the whole revolutionary period the peasant women, standing always united with their menfolk, guarded and defended peasant interests, and with amazing tact and sensitivity referred to their special, 'women's' needs only when that did not endanger the common peasant cause.

This did not mean that the peasant women were indifferent to their needs as women, that they ignored them. On the contrary, the mass emergence of peasant women onto the political arena, their mass participation in the common struggle, reinforced and developed their feminine self-awareness. By November, 1905, the peasant women of the Voronezh province sent two of their own deputies to the peasant congress with instructions from the women's gathering to demand 'political rights' and 'freedom' for women on an equal basis with men.*

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* It is sufficient to recall the historic written requests sent by the peasant women of the Voronezh and Tver provinces to the First State Duma, or the telegram sent by the peasant women from the village of Nogatkino to the deputy Aladyin:

'At this great moment in the battle between right and might, we,

The female peasant population of the Caucasus defended their rights with particular vigour. The Guria peasant women at village meetings in the Kutaisi province adopted resolutions demanding political equality with men. At rural and urban meetings held to discuss the introduction of Zemstvos in Transcaucasia, the deputies representing the local population included Georgian women who insisted upon their rights as women.

While demanding political equality, the peasant women naturally always raised their voices in defence of their economic interests; the question of 'allotments' of land, concerned the peasant woman as much as it did the peasant man. In some regions, peasant women who had enthusiastically supported the idea of expropriating private land, cooled in their support for this measure when the question arose as to whether the women would be included in the count to determine the size of the land allotment. 'If the land is taken from the landowners and given only to the men,' the women argued anxiously, 'then we will face real slavery. At present we can at least earn a few kopecks on our own account, whereas if that were to happen, we will simply be working for the men.' However, the fears of the peasant women proved to be completely unfounded; simple economic calculation obliged the peasantry to insist that land also be given to the women. The agrarian interests of the male and female sections of the peasantry were so closely interwoven that the men, in fighting to abolish the existing agricultural bondage for themselves, inevitably defended at the same time the economic interests of their womenfolk.

However, in fighting for the economic and political interests of the peasantry as a whole, the peasant woman also learned how to fight for her own specific needs and requirements as a woman. The same held true for the woman worker; with her unfailing participation in the whole liberation movement she, even more than the peasant

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the peasant women of the village of Nogatkino, greet the elected delegates of the people who have expressed their lack of confidence in the government by demanding the resignation of the ministry. We hope that the representatives who have the support of the people will give that people land and freedom, will open the doors of the prisons and release those who fought for the freedom and happiness of the people, and that they will win civil and political rights both for themselves and for us, Russian women, who are without rights even in our own families. Remember that a woman slave cannot be the mother of a free citizen.' (Signed – the spokeswoman for 75 Nogatkino women.)

woman, prepared public opinion to accept the principle of female equality. The idea of civic equality for women, now implemented in Soviet Russia, was spread through society not by the heroic efforts of individual women with forceful personalities, not by the struggle of the bourgeois feminists, but by the spontaneous pressure of broad masses of working and peasant women, who had been roused into life by the thunder of the first Russian revolution in 1905.

In 1909, in my book *The Social Basis of the Women's Question*, I said, arguing against the bourgeois feminists, against whom the whole of my book is directed: 'If the peasant woman does succeed in achieving in the near future an improvement in her domestic, economic and legal position, this will naturally be thanks only to the combined, united efforts of peasant democracy directed at obtaining the fulfilment of those peasant demands which, in one form or another, continue to be heard in the peasant milieu. Attempts by the feminists to "clear the way for women", are here irrelevant... If the peasant woman does free herself from the present agrarian bondage, she will receive more than all the feminist organisations put together could give her.' *

These words, written ten years ago, have now been fully vindicated. The Great October Revolution has not only fulfilled the basic, urgent demand of the peasantry of both sexes that the land be transferred into the hands of those who work it, but has also raised the peasant woman to the honourable position of a free citizen equal in every respect, and now enslaved only by old methods of agricultural work and by still persisting family traditions and mores.

That of which the working and peasant women could only dream in the days of the first Russian revolution in 1905 has been translated into reality by the Great October Revolution of 1917.

Woman in Russia has achieved political equality. However she owes this achievement not to co-operation with bourgeois suffragettes, but to a joint, united struggle with her comrade workers in the ranks of her own working class.

A. Kollontai,
On the History of the Movement of Women Workers' in Russia,
Kharkov, 1920, pp. 3–11

* A. Kollontai, *The Social Basis of the Women's Question*, St Petersburg, 1909, p. 421 (in Russian).

V. I. Lenin and the First Congress of Women Workers[49]

[November, 1918]

Vladimir Ilyich was the one who initiated the involvement of broad masses of women from the cities and villages in the building of a socialist state.

The Soviet Union occupies a unique position in the world in this respect. No comparable phenomenon can be found in any other state.

In every country of the world women waged and are waging their own struggle for their rights, and face powerful resistance and curt rejection on the part of their own bourgeois governments. In many countries women fought heroically for their rights, but they were nonetheless unable to achieve anywhere else those rights enjoyed by every woman in every Soviet republic.

The uniqueness of the Soviet Union lies in the fact that it is not the women themselves who demand from the government the right to work, to education, and to the protection of motherhood, but the government which itself draws the women into every sphere of labour, including those to which they have absolutely no access in the majority of bourgeois countries, and simultaneously protects the interests of women as mothers. All of this is written into the Soviet Constitution, and it is without parallel anywhere in the world.

...The first congress of women workers began the great work conducted by the party among the millions of women of the USSR. Vladimir Ilyich was present at this congress...

From the very first days of the October Revolution, Soviet power accorded women full rights; however, not all women were as yet able to avail themselves of them. Among the women there were those who, as a result of their lack of class consciousness, were deceived by the opponents of Soviet power.

Vladimir Ilyich (once) said (and I clearly remember his words):

'If even the most resolute and courageous fighter on the civil war front returns home and has to listen day after day to the

grumbles and complaints of his wife and face in her, as a result of her lack of political consciousness, an opponent to the continuing struggle for Soviet power, the will of even a valiant warrior hardened in battle may weaken, and he who did not surrender to counter-revolution may surrender to his wife and come under her harmful influence.

'Therefore,' said Vladimir Ilyich, 'we must mould the female working masses into a solid bulwark of Soviet power against counter-revolution. Each woman must understand that, in fighting for Soviet power, she is fighting for her own rights and for those of her children.'

In the autumn of 1918, the party sent a group of active Bolsheviks to various parts of the country in order to conduct work among the women. I was sent by Sverdlov to Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Kineshma, Ivanovo and other places. I remember how one woman textile worker called Anuchkina invited me home. She offered me a cup of tea; there was no bread, no sugar, but a great deal of enthusiasm. During our conversation, comrade Anuchkina expressed the opinion that it was now time to convene a congress of working and peasant women. I liked the idea, and put it before the party Central Committee when I returned to Moscow.

Vladimir Ilyich fully approved of this idea and gave it his support.

'Of course,' he said, 'there should be no separate women's organisations, but the appropriate apparatus should be set up within the party which would assume responsibility for raising the level of consciousness among the female population, and which would teach women how to use their rights in order to build the Soviet state, that is, in order to build a better future. Women must be drawn into local Soviets in both the towns and the villages, they must be given practical tasks and knowledge. Particular attention must also be given to the development of those institutions which lighten the burden of motherhood for women actively engaged in working for the state in the Soviets and factories.

These ideas and tasks set forth by Vladimir Ilyich formed the basis of the work done at the first congress of women workers, held on 16-21 November, 1918.

The lead group of women Bolsheviks, which included Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, Inessa Armand, myself and some others – altogether the group had 20–25 members – drew up reports and resolutions on various issues.

I was given the job of preparing a report and resolution on

methods of work among women and on the organisation of the appropriate apparatus within the party, that is, the creation of women's sections. This resolution was approved at our congress, and formed the basis of a decade of work by these women's sections in the party. It was also adopted at the Second International Conference of Women Communists in 1921 [50] as a guideline for all the parties that are members of the Comintern.

At the time the congress was convened, not everyone appreciated its importance and significance. I remember that there was opposition from Rykov, Zinoviev and others. However, Vladimir Ilyich declared that the congress was necessary. He always inquired how we were progressing and whether women were responding to our call.

The preparatory work for our first congress was not easy. The postal service was operating badly and we received no reply from party committees to our appeal to send women delegates. On the basis of rough calculations, we estimated that about 300 would come. In fact the number was 1,147. By that time we had been given premises in the 3rd House of Soviets (Sadovo-Karetnaya St. in Moscow). However, we had laid on food for only three-five hundred people. That night I received telephone calls from Podchufarova and Baranova, who told me: 'The delegates have arrived, but discontent is growing—there is no bread, no sugar, no tea.'...

There is a report on the congress in the magazine *Kommunistka*, No. 11, 1923 ('How We Convened the First All-Russia Congress of Working and Peasant Women').

Vladimir Ilyich followed events at the congress, and Nadezhda Konstantinovna, who was a member of the presidium, gave him an account of its work each day. She told Lenin that the delegates included a number of poor peasant women in sheepskin jackets who spoke against the kulaks, and that there were many good speakers. Vladimir Ilyich told her he would go and see them.

Vladimir Ilyich arrived unexpectedly during a speech given by comrade Soboleva. We wanted to interrupt her, but Vladimir Ilyich insisted that she finish her speech. However, everyone had, of course, stopped listening to her.

On 19 November, Vladimir Ilyich made his historic speech that became the basis of our work. The congress adopted proposals on methods of work, on the protection of mothers and young children, and many others.

Vladimir Ilyich believed that women should be given the

possibility of working in the state apparatus while simultaneously being able to be mothers. Women are a valuable creative force, but they also have the right and duty to be mothers. Motherhood is a major social obligation.

Our Soviet state is implementing to the full these basic propositions put forward by Vladimir Ilyich.

Not only the women of the Soviet Union, but women throughout the world should know that Vladimir Ilyich laid the foundations of female emancipation. To attain legal rights is insufficient; women must be emancipated in practice. The emancipation of women means giving them the opportunity to bring up their children, combining motherhood with work for society.

Nowhere in the world, nowhere in history is there such a thinker and statesman who has done so much for the emancipation of women as Vladimir Ilyich.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Reminiscences. 1900-1922, Moscow, 1963, pp. 221-223

The First Steps Towards the Protection of Motherhood

[1917–1918]

The idea of establishing a Department for the Protection of Mother and Child arose in the heat of the October battles. The basic principles underlying the work of the department, and the related statutes on social provision for mothers and expectant mothers were drafted at the first conference of women workers[51] immediately following the October Revolution.

The conference was summoned at my suggestion as a member of the Central Committee, and we set up a lead group of women Bolsheviks at the editorial board of the magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker).[52] This first conference of the representatives of women industrial workers to be held in Russia had the task of binding together the female working masses who had spontaneously inclined towards the revolution, supporting the Soviets and the Bolsheviks. The conference was attended by more than 500 women delegates from the factories and plants of Petrograd. There were also some delegates from Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Tula and Kaluga.

The preparations for the conference were marked by lively enthusiasm, and evoked interest and eager response among the awakening masses of women workers who already had their own team of workers grouped around the magazine *Rabotnitsa* and its heart – Klavdia Nikolayeva and Konkordia Samoilova.

At the conference the main demands of Bolshevik women workers were put forward and adopted. Prominent among these demands was the question of protection and provision for motherhood. In a modest building somewhere on Bolotnaya St., in the very midst of the October revolution, when the approaches to Petrograd had still not been completely cleared of the troops of the Provisional Government, when something akin to a self-appointed government of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries was still sitting in the City Duma in Petrograd, women workers were engaged in business-like and enthusiastic discussions on the measures that should be

immediately introduced by the Soviet government in order to protect working mothers and their babies.

On 6 November, 1917, I delivered a speech on the protection of motherhood in my capacity as a member of the party Central Committee and secretary of the lead group of women workers. My theses were taken as the basis for discussion. The women workers attending the conference listened to my report with great interest and took an active part in the discussions and the elaboration of the theses. These theses were then passed on 'as guidelines' to the People's Commissariat for State Welfare and the People's Commissariat for Labour, which then included the Department of Social Security.

If the legislation on protection and provision for motherhood now in force is compared with the theses adopted at the first conference of women workers, it is clear that it was precisely the aspirations expressed at the conference that served as the basis for Soviet legislation in this area.

It should therefore be noted that the initiative on the issue of protection and provision for mother and child came from the working women themselves. At that time, very few working women actively participated in the Soviets. But from the very first days of Soviet power, working women were able to contribute constructively to the work of the Soviets as regards lightening the burden of motherhood for women.

The measures to protect and provide for motherhood were carried through in the first months of Soviet government by two People's Commissariats: the People's Commissariat for State Welfare and the People's Commissariat for Labour. The latter drew up a series of statutes in the field of social legislation. The People's Commissariat for State Welfare carried through the measures designed to assist working mothers.

The first concern of the People's Commissariat for State Welfare was to maintain and rebuild the huge children's homes in Petrograd and Moscow, in order to convert these 'angel factories' into homes for mother and child.

The People's Commissariat also took control of all the existing crèches, consultation centres and children's homes (very few in number) that had been founded before the revolution by charitable organisations.

In order to take possession of these institutions and run them in accord with Soviet policy, the People's Commissariat for State Welfare first had to form a section of social investigation whose members included a large number of women workers

from factories and plants. Its first task was to investigate all institutions whose work was connected with the protection of mother and child, and to deal with the open sabotage by their staff and administrators.

In December, 1917, that is, six weeks after power had been transferred into the hands of the proletariat, it became clear that the People's Commissariat required a special centre to supervise the work being done in the sphere of protection for mother and child if it was to cope with the increasing demand and workload.

On 31 December, 1917, the People's Commissariat issued a decree on the creation of a board whose task was to set up a Department for the Protection of Mother and Child. Doctor Korolyov was appointed head of the department, while the chairman of the board was the People's Commissar for State Welfare.

The Soviet government is the first government in the world to officially and legally recognise maternity as one of the social functions of women and, basing itself on the fact that in a republic of working people women will always have this particular labour obligation towards society (i. e. the obligation to bear and bring up children – *Tr.*), it has approached the problem of providing for motherhood from this new point of view.

During the first months of Soviet power, the People's Commissariat concentrated on the organisation and reorganisation of those institutions which could help lighten the burden of motherhood and combat the high infant mortality rate.

With the decree issued on 20 January, 1918, the People's Commissariat for State Welfare began to set in order and reorganise lying-in hospitals. The decree ordered that all lying-in hospitals and all centres, clinics and institutes of gynaecology and midwifery be transferred to the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child. The decree also ordered that medical services for expectant mothers be organised on the basis of three new principles: 1) that medical assistance be available to all needy mothers, i. e. that the doors of lying-in hospitals be opened precisely to the poorest section of the female population – workers, peasants and office workers; 2) that doctors be paid a state salary so as to abolish the advantages enjoyed by more prosperous women able to pay the doctor for his services, thereby ending the inequality between poor and prosperous expectant and nursing mothers;

3) that expectant and nursing mothers, particularly the poor, be protected against a view which saw them as 'sacrifices to science' on whom unskilled midwives and young students gained practice. No one, noted the decree, has the right to view a woman fulfilling her sacred but painful civic duty of motherhood as a 'sacrifice to science'. The decree also replaced one-year midwifery courses with two-year courses, and the trainee midwives were permitted to assist at deliveries only in the second year.

The next step taken by the board for the protection of mother and child was to bring together in one state organisation all the institutions caring for mother and child in the pre- and post-natal periods, and all institutions involved in child care, from children's homes to village crèches. A decree issued by the People's Commissariat on 31 January, 1918, instructed the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child to create a network of institutions which would bring up for the Soviet Republic spiritually and physically strong and healthy citizens. This same decree also ordered the creation of a model Palace of Motherhood and the conversion of all the lying-in hospitals and children's homes in Moscow and Petrograd into one general institution to be known as 'The Moscow Children's Institute' and 'The Petrograd Children's Institute'. Children's homes were renamed young children's palaces.

The increasing scope of the activity undertaken by the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child, and the enthusiastic response this activity elicited among working women obliged the People's Commissariat to broaden the composition of the board for the protection of motherhood to include men and women representatives of the trade unions, health insurance, the Petrograd district Soviets and the editorial board of the magazine *Rabotnitsa.*

By a decree issued on 31 January, the board was reorganised into a commission whose activity was to pursue three basic aims: 1) protection of the child, i.e. the reduction of infant mortality; 2) the upbringing of the child in an atmosphere corresponding to the broad concept of the socialist family (the organisation of mother and baby homes, laying the basis for social upbringing from the very first days of the child's life; 3) the creation of a healthy environment in which the child can develop both physically and spiritually.

In January, 1918, before the decree was published, the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child set about

organising a Palace of Mother and Child Protection, which was to comprise: a Young Children's Palace (a former children's home) and a Palace of Motherhood (a former clinical institute bf midwifery and gynaecology in Petrograd). According to the plans drawn up by the Commission for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Department, the Palace of Mother and Child Protection was to include a museum devoted to the protection of mother and child (an idea which was to be orilliantly executed later by V. P. Lebedeva in the form of an exhibition on the protection of mother and child), exemplary crèches, consultation centres, a baby food dispensary, a child fostering centre... The former Nikolayevsky Institute, which was found to be eminently suitable for the purpose, was chosen to house the new Palace...

Alexandra Kollontai,
From My Life and Work.
Moscow, 1974, pp. 336-340

The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia

1921

In Soviet Russia there is no independent movement of women workers. In Soviet Russia the proletariat of both sexes are indissolubly united in their struggle to establish and consolidate the dictatorship (of the proletariat – *Tr.*) and to build the new society of working people.

However, precisely in order to ensure this unity, this joint struggle and joint work, the Communist Party had to include among its tasks the special task of involving women actively in the construction of a new future and in the conscious defence of the first republic of working people against its internal and external enemies.

This task was formulated by the Bolshevik Party as far back as the eve of the revolution, the spring of 1917, when the editorial board of the magazine *Rabotnitsa* was set up under the party Central Committee in order to serve not only as a centre of propaganda work among the female proletariat, but also as a centre organising women workers around the banner of Bolshevism.

At a time when bourgeois chauvinism and Kerenskyism[53] were in full flood and the dangers of conciliation had not yet been finally eliminated, the editorial board of *Rabotnitsa*, responding in early June, 1917, to Kerensky's call for the Russian army to advance, organised a large international meeting calling for opposition to the criminal slaughter of the war and for world-wide worker solidarity against the common enemy – the capitalists – and their loyal servants, the conciliators. This was the first open international meeting in Russia.

In autumn, 1917, with the struggle of the proletariat for Soviet power having intensified, and faced with the threat of an offensive by General Kornilov, the most progressive and conscious section of women workers came out in support of the Bolsheviks and became actively involved in the civil war

that had broken out. However, the broad mass of women workers and peasants remained outside the movement, passively bearing the increasing burden of economic collapse, deprivation and suffering that inevitably accompany the clash between two social worlds.

The Great October Revolution and the transfer of power into the hands of the working people gave women in Russia full political and civil equality. A new age opened up before women workers and peasants. An end had been put to their former, age-old lack of rights. From that moment on, women enjoyed total equality in every sphere of the work and life of the state. From the very first days following the October Revolution, the Communist Party hastened to make use of the energies of women communists and women workers sympathetic to Soviet power. Women were appointed Commissars, were given important posts, and even sat on the Council of People's Commissars. They were given work in every section of the newly formed Soviet state apparatus...

The doors of the Communist Party stood open to women of the working class, and the law gave them every opportunity to participate in the work of the Soviets to reshape their way of life and thus improve their own living conditions... However, the broad mass of women workers and peasants (taken in the majority) looked with fear upon communists and Soviet power, seeing in them only the destroyers of the fundamental order and ancient traditions, 'godless' people who separated church and state, heartless people who wished to take children away from their mothers and hand them over to be brought up by the state.

Starvation and deprivation further stimulated the blind resentment of the women, who transmitted to their families ideas and attitudes hostile to communism.

In the autumn of 1918 after the attempt by counter-revolution, with the assistance of the Czechoslovaks, to smash the Bolsheviks and put an end to Soviet power, the party recognised the urgency of the problem of involving women workers in Soviet construction and raising their level of class-consciousness. The women, who had stood aside from the movement to consolidate the Soviets, were already becoming a factor actively assisting counter-revolution.

In the interests of communism it was necessary to win over the women workers and turn them into defenders of Soviet power. General propaganda of the ideas of Soviet power and communism proved insufficient to draw women into the

movement. A special approach had to be found as regards the women workers and poorest peasants; a special method of work among women had to be developed in order to force them to understand and appreciate what their position should be and which power best guaranteed women's interests – the dictatorship of the proletariat, or a return to the rule of the bourgeoisie.

On the initiative of a group of communist women in Moscow, and with the full support of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, the First All-Russia Congress of Women Workers and Peasants was convened in Moscow in November, 1918. It was attended by over a thousand women delegates elected at women workers' and peasants' meetings. This congress was not only of enormous propaganda significance, but also laid the foundations for the creation within the Russian Communist Party of a special, all-Russia apparatus for conducting work among women. The creation of a special apparatus within the party whose purpose was to draw the mass of the female population into the construction of a republic of working people and into the struggle for communism thus received official recognition within the party.

To begin with, responsibility for this work was assumed by the Commissions for Propaganda Among Women Workers, organised under the auspices of party committees.[54] The slogan of the commissions ran: 'propaganda in deeds as well as words', which meant that women workers and peasants were to be turned into conscious and active communists via involvement in the creative practical work of the Soviets. With this in view, the commissions created a special apparatus linking the party with the broad mass of backward working women. This apparatus was the council of women delegates. Each enterprise and each workshop was to send one woman delegate for every fifty women workers to the delegate council of women workers. The delegates were elected for three months, and their attendance at weekly delegate councils, at which they were informed about recent political events, about the work being done in various branches of Soviet construction, and in particular about social education, public catering, protection of motherhood and other areas of state activity directly assisting the domestic emancipation of working woman, was compulsory. The delegates not only attended the councils, but were also charged with a number of practical activities which included

membership of the commissions on labour protection, on improving living conditions, on provision for motherhood, etc., operating at their own enterprises, visits of inspection to state institutions in order to become familiar with the methods and systems of work used in various branches of the state apparatus, and also co-operating in various party and state campaigns. As the work done by the party among the women increased, it became necessary to regulate it, make it more efficient and thorough-going. In the autumn of 1919, the party reorganised the Commissions for Propaganda Among Women Workers into departments for work among women. Such departments now form part of every local party committee, from the Central Committee to city, district and uyezd committees.

The departments for work among women not only involve women workers and peasants in the party and in state construction, turning them into active women Communists, but also bring independent initiative into the building of communism, putting before the party and state organs tasks related to the comprehensive and practical emancipation of women. Thus, on the initiative of the departments, abortion was legalised, and the proposal advanced at the Eighth Congress of Soviets on actively involving women workers in the rehabilitation of the economy and organisation of production by bringing women into all the organs of economic management has been adopted. The inter-departmental commission for the campaign against prostitution, and the commissions to promote the protection of mother and child were also set up on the initiative of these departments. During the elaboration of the law on the obligation to work (April, 1920) they introduced a number of clauses relating to the protection of the physical strength, health and interests of mothers. Finally, in April of this year, on the initiative of the women's departments, a law was passed through the Council of People's Commissars on involving women workers and peasants in the practical work of executive committee departments and institutions for a period of two months with a view to infusing new life into the state apparatus and freeing it from bureaucratic elements, and also in order to train state executives from among the women workers.

Over the two and a half years since the creation within the party of the special apparatus to conduct work among women with a view to involving women workers and

peasants in the construction of a republic of working people ... and drawing them into communism, enormous progress has been made. The former mistrustful or passive attitude among the mass of women to the revolution and to Soviet power is now found only in the most remote areas where the women's departments have not yet begun to expand their activities.

Of the total party membership, 9-10 per cent is comprised of women. According to the latest figures (February-March), there are 3,842 women communists in 12 provinces, including:

women workers	2,406
intelligentsia	1,010
peasants	426
total	3,842

The number of delegates in these provinces totals 12,910.

On the most conservative estimates, the number of delegates linked to the women workers' departments, and therefore under the influence of the Communist Party, is more than 70 thousand. These 70 thousand delegates elected from among women workers, housewives and peasant women (the latter elected on a village basis) represent a female population numbering more than 3 million, all linked to the party. Through their deputies, these 3 million women are involved in one way or another in the practical work of state construction either in the sphere of production organisation, or in national defence, or in the re-organisation of daily life and living conditions on new communist principles. Thus, for example, in the 12 provinces for which we have the most recent figures, 6,930 women workers took part in subbotniks,* and 2,975 women workers and peasants worked in Soviet institutions.

Thus, through active, practical participation in the work to rehabilitate the economy, help the Red Army, develop agriculture, provide for children (Children's Week), overcome the fuel crisis and get the transport system working again, etc., the party is gradually moulding out of hundreds of thousands of 'non-party' women workers and peasants not only new, fresh forces working for the Soviet system, but also

* A day (usually a Saturday or Sunday) of voluntary unpaid labour for the state.– *Tr.*

conscious defenders of the republic of the working people and of communism. The broad mass of women workers has already ceased to be the bulwark of counter-revolution. These three years of special work among women have succeeded not only in awakening their political consciousness, but also in accustoming them to active participation in the construction of the new society.

Immediately following the revolution, women were elected as members of the Soviets. However, the election of women was still rare, an exception to the rule. Women were more commonly used to help carry through the designated tasks, and it was a rarity for women to be given administrative posts involving decision-making. Even now there are not many women workers and peasants who are members of the Soviets. For example, in the 12 provinces referred to above, there are only 635 women members of Soviets, that is, an average of 52 members for each province. Moreover, in the uyezd Soviets the number of women members is 574, while in the provincial Soviets there are only seven...

Women workers have been particularly active over recent years in the inspection of various institutions, primarily canteens, hospitals and all the children's institutions that form part of the network of social upbringing. A number of abuses in these institutions, mismanagement, incompetence, and sometimes a deliberately obstructive approach on the part of representatives of the petty-bourgeois elements that poured into state institutions, were discovered thanks to the vigilant eye and conscientiousness of the women workers. In the afore-mentioned 12 provinces, 3,436 women worker delegates sat on inspection commissions. In Petrograd, around 500 women delegates took part in the inspection of infirmaries. According to the figures of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, up to 25 thousand women workers and peasants were actively involved in large-scale inspections throughout the whole of Russia. When the republic of working people was faced with the problem of looking after wounded Red Army soldiers, Moscow women workers, under the leadership of the women workers' departments, immediately organised groups of 20-50 delegates who visited the army hospitals once a week, inspected them, reported on inadequacies to the appropriate institution and organised subbotniks to clean the infirmaries and mend the clothes of the wounded. When there were not enough medical orderlies, the delegates helped to transport the ill and the wounded,

visited them, read them newspapers, wrote their letters for them, etc. According to the People's Commissariat for Health, the women delegates played a not unimportant role in the improvement of conditions in Moscow hospitals.

As regards the involvement of women in military affairs, the Soviet republic of the working people has adopted a completely new approach. The bourgeoisie has always based itself on the view that the woman was and should remain the preserver of the home, while nature has determined that the man should defend it, or, by extension, should defend the fatherland, the state.

'War,' according to the bourgeoisie, 'is men's business.' The idea of taking women into the armed forces appeared monstrous to bourgeois society. It would undermine the 'foundations of the family' – an institution essential to private property and the class-based state.

The use of female personnel during the last imperialist war, particularly in England, was significant not so much as a practical state measure, but rather as a particular form of patriotic propaganda.

A very different attitude is developing in the state of the working people to the involvement of women workers and peasants into the army for the self-defence of the republic of the working people. In the transitional period through which we are now passing, the two duties of each member of the state of the working people to work and to defend that republic are fusing together. The great revolution that took place in October, 1917, in the organisation of production and in the national economy of Russia have had a radical effect upon the lives of women and their role in the state. The communist state, in which all the available reserves of adult citizens are taken into account in order to be put to more rational use and in order to develop the national productive forces more successfully, is already unable to dispense with the part played by women. Just as the basic economic system requires, in the interests of the working class, that the greatest possible number of women be involved in it, so also the self-defence of the working class against bourgeois domination requires that women workers and peasants be used for the army and the navy. The involvement of women, of women workers and peasants, in military affairs is dictated not by short-term political considerations, such as those that guided the bourgeois governments in the imperialist war, but by the fundamental objectives of the working class.

The broader the participation by the working population in its vital objectives, the more successfully will the workers' and peasants' army be able to defend the revolution.

The Red Army needs the active involvement of women workers and peasants. Women should be used to ensure success at the front precisely because this victory is essential to the women themselves for their total emancipation and the consolidation of those rights which the October Revolution has won for them. Therefore the participation of women workers and peasants in the Soviet class army is to be evaluated not only in terms of the practical aid which women have already supplied to the army and the war front, but also in terms of that inevitable radical change introduced by the question of involving women in military matters. While the October Revolution paved the way for the abolition of the former inequality between the sexes, the active involvement of women on our common basic fronts—the labour front and the war front—will destroy the lingering prejudices that fed this inequality.

Women workers and peasants were involved in the civil, class war from the very first barricade battles in 1917. Just as the Red Guards[55] emerged spontaneously in the workers' districts, so also there arose, just as spontaneously, auxiliary detachments of women medical orderlies, Red nurses, and simply groups of volunteer women workers and peasants who assumed one function or another in the Red Guards during and immediately after the October days. However, at that time the involvement of women workers and peasants was not a mass phenomenon, nor was it organised. It was only from the end of 1918 onwards that the women workers and peasants of the Soviet Republic began to take part in military affairs on an organised basis. When the Red Army was formed to replace the Red Guards, the government of workers and peasants did, it is true, appeal for co-operation not only by men, but also by women. However, it did not prove possible at first to find a practical, useful way of making widespread use of women at the front.

The active involvement of working women in the Red Army consists primarily in the formation of an entire detachment of women communists who function as political propagandists in the army, as political workers. Many of these women political workers in the army died alongside their comrades in defence of Soviet power, while others returned decorated with the Order of the Red Banner.

Even in the army Military Revolutionary Councils the number of women members was very small. The political sections of the Red Army are to a large degree the creation of the talented organiser, comrade Varsenika-Kasparova.

The second way in which women workers are involved in military matters is as Red nurses and medical orderlies. The first trained Red nurses from among women workers who had attended special courses arrived at the front in November, 1919, and a number of documents testify to their selfless work and that of the medical orderlies.

Over a period of two years, up to 6,000 trained women workers, Red nurses and medical orderlies have been sent to the front...

The women workers and peasants serving as Red nurses and medical orderlies have shown cheerfulness and enthusiasm in their work. The Red nurse treats the wounded Red Army soldier first and foremost as a comrade and brother, and does not show that sickly-sweet condescension with which the bourgeois nurse approached the 'poor soldier'.

The organisation of medical assistance to the army has opened before the women workers and peasants a wide sphere of necessary and important work, particularly at a moment when Soviet Russia is experiencing bitter class conflict.

However, the role of women in the defence of the Soviet Republic is not limited to the organisation of medical assistance. One only has to remember the critical moments in the struggle, when all the gains of our revolution were in danger, to realise how great and important a role women workers and peasants have played in the self-defence of the republic. Three episodes in the class war over the last three years serve to illustrate this very clearly: the attack by the Whites on the Donbas and Lugansk in 1919, the Denikin threat to Tula and the Yudenich threat to Red Petrograd in the autumn of the same year; Lugansk succeeded in repelling the second attack on the Red city by White Guard bands thanks only to the massive and active participation of working men and women in every sphere of defence. Particularly memorable is the resolute stand adopted by the working women of Tula during Denikin's advance: 'Denikin will reach Moscow only over our dead bodies,' declared the women workers, who were then fulfilling a variety of roles and carrying out every kind of work for the front, from

digging trenches to army communications. The fame of the women workers of Petrograd, who repelled the attack by Yudenich, is too well known to need repetition here. The proletarian women of Petrograd not only provided 500 Red nurses and medical orderlies for the front, but also served in their thousands in the machine-gun companies, in communications, in sapper companies, and laboured selflessly in the cold autumn weather to dig trenches and surround Petrograd with barbed wire...

Not only in Moscow, but throughout the whole of Russia, the system of universal military training is drawing young women workers and peasants into military matters, thus gradually creating the reserves necessary to defend the republic from international predators.

During the last three years, not one recruitment campaign has been conducted in which women have not taken an active part. Women workers and peasants helped to combat army desertion, and to collect the necessary army equipment; they visited infirmaries and concerned themselves about the fate of sick and wounded Red Army soldiers. The appeal from the Red front found a warm response in the hearts of women workers and peasants. The industrial centres in particular sent a large number of women to the front. Her class sense tells the woman worker that the total emancipation of women is indissolubly linked with each first victory of the Red front.

In May of this year, the first women workers will complete their course in military communications. Over the last few months courses for women telephonists and telegraph operators have become available in various parts of the country; the latest graduates completed courses in Samara and Simbirsk in the summer of 1920, and provided efficient cadres for the Southern and South-Western fronts.

The heroism of the women workers and peasants, their direct involvement in battle and their fearlessness under fire is referred to in dispatches from General Headquarters. The number of Red Army women who have been killed, wounded or taken prisoner is 1,854. Many women have been awarded the Order of the Red Banner: medical orderlies, telephonists, Red Army women soldiers in machine-gun detachments, medical orderlies, doctors, etc.

Women workers have also played an important role in organising the public catering service. They are involved in the organisation of public canteens, in food quality control,

in the management of canteens and the organisation of a special children's food service. Women delegates organise a duty roster for mothers at children's canteens. In some places (for example Kiev, the Moscow province, etc.), women workers took the first steps to organise factory canteens. In the provincial capitals of Russia almost the entire population is now using the public catering service. About five million people now use canteens, which shows first and foremost that, in what concerns the emancipation of women from the slavery of housework, working Russia has managed during the four years following the revolution to achieve that which no bourgeois country would have dared attempt. Up to 75 thousand women are now employed in the public catering service.

Women workers are particularly active in social education. This area of Soviet policy is the one that even backward women workers can most easily understand and sympathize with. Numerous children's institutions: children's homes, crèches and nurseries – are run by women workers. Women delegates are helping Soviet organs of government to organise new institutions and improve those that already exist. Under the pressure of women Communists working in social education, the former charitable 'refuges' for orphans – those breeding grounds producing servile and will-less servants of the bourgeoisie – are disappearing, to be replaced by new forms of social education for children in the healthy environment of children's homes, kindergartens, and playgrounds where women workers can leave their children with an easy heart. It is true that material obstacles such as the shortage of equipment, textbooks, clothing and a normal supply of food are severely impeding the exemplary organisation of 'social education'. However, the policy laid down by the Soviet government in this sphere is receiving the energetic support of many communist women, and the very idea of social education is gradually penetrating the consciousness of broad masses of women workers. A number of women communists – comrades Nikolayeva (a former woman worker), Lilina, Yelizarova, Dyushen – have made their valuable contribution to this cause and assisted the progress of this difficult and responsible work while the names of comrades Nadezhda Krupskaya and L. Menzhinskaya are inseparably linked with the creation of one, unified school of labour and the organisation of widespread out-of-school education.

Not only in the capital cities of Soviet Russia, but also in many provincial towns, courses have been started for children's nurses, kindergarten teachers, women crèche organisers, etc., and women workers are being sent to attend them.

Closely linked to the activities of women workers in the sphere of social education is the work done by women delegates and women communists to ensure protection for mother and child. On the initiative of the women's departments, special Commissions of Support have been organised as part of the subdivision concerned with the protection of mother and child. These special commissions are to assist in the broad practical implementation of those decrees on the protection of motherhood which, for a number of technical reasons, and particularly as a result of the dislocation of the national economy, are in effect only benefiting an extremely small number of working women.

The Commissions of Support, under the leadership of the women's departments, are conducting a campaign to spread the idea of protecting mother and child, and are familiarising women workers at their place of work with the basic laws on the protection of expectant and nursing mothers at work, and are checking on the implementation of all legislation in this area.

Women workers in the Ukraine are particularly active in the sphere of the protection of motherhood, and each enterprise has a group concerned with this issue. Women workers are the directors of numerous institutions, crèches, mother and child homes, and themselves run the local departments.

Comrade Moirova, who is in charge of the Ukrainian Department of Women Workers under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, is a tireless worker who shows gıeat initiative. In just one year she has succeeded in raising the work of the women's departments in the sphere of protection of mother and child to the necessary level, having begun this work in the Ukraine under the guidance of one of the leading figures in work among the female proletariat in Russia, Comrade Konkordia Samoilova.

There is still one major and difficult task to be carried through in the sphere of protection of mother and child. At present, the measures taken to protect and provide for motherhood benefit only women working in factories and

plants, and even here they do not cover everyone. In the countryside, even summer crèches are few in number. However, this task has already been set, and will be dealt with as soon as it is materially possible to do so...

The protection of motherhood is impossible without the proper organisation of labour protection at factories. Despite the fact that the principle of equal pay for equal work was established in Soviet Russia from the very first moment of the revolution, most women workers in fact continue to do lower-paid work. The fact that women often lack qualifications means that women belong to the lower-paid category of workers. Moreover, very little has been done to improve sanitation and hygiene at factories. Harmful, unhealthy conditions of work seriously affect women workers, particularly if one takes into account the fact that decrees are implemented only under pressure from the Commissions of Labour Protection. Women workers are being brought into these commissions and made responsible for checking that the decrees on labour protection are implemented, for encouraging an improvement in conditions of work (provision of washrooms, cloakrooms, canteens, etc.), and in particular for concerning themselves with the help of the Commissions of Support with the protection of motherhood and the fate of nursing and pregnant women workers.

Over these four years women workers have also played a major role in eliminating illiteracy. The Communist Party departments of women workers have succeeded in drawing large numbers of working women into this work. In some provinces every enterprise has a woman delegate specifically selected to assist in eliminating adult illiteracy. Women worker delegates give technical assistance to schools, teach or help to organise literacy schools.

In Yekaterinburg, the women workers themselves organised a census of the illiterate. Over recent years, the question of eliminating illiteracy was raised at many conferences of women workers.

Women workers are participating in the administration of Soviet law, both as judges and as members of the jury. In particular it is now becoming customary for women of the Soviet East to take part in people's courts. Here, women are achieving emancipation from their everyday yoke and religious tradition only thanks to the support of Soviet legislation. In Bashkiria, among the Kirghiz and Tatar women, and in Turkestan, the court is one of the first stages

of Soviet work among Muslim women who are only just awakening and becoming conscious of their rights.*

In order to make more effective use of women workers in the cause of Soviet construction, the women's departments are everywhere seconding women workers to courses. At first, women workers attended mainly courses on the protection of motherhood, organised by Comrade Lebedeva, who was in charge of all the work done for the protection of mother and child in Soviet Russia and who managed to raise this work to the necessary level. Subsequently the women started to attend courses for medical orderlies and Red nurses, and courses on pre-school upbringing.

However, women workers are now being seconded to all courses on Soviet construction and party work. Women delegates from the women's departments have been allotted 10 per cent of all the places available on party courses. In 1920 ten provinces sent 3,484 women workers and peasants to such courses through the women's departments.

On the initiative of the Central Women's Department, a special section has been set up at the Sverdlov University (the central party school) which introduce the students to the basic methods and forms of work among the female proletariat. In order to ensure that women workers, peasants and housewives are brought up in the spirit of communism, the women's departments have obtained for themselves a certain number of places in schools and on courses and, in addition to oral propaganda of the ideas of communism, are also conducting systematic written propaganda by means of special publications. In Soviet Russia at present local party newspapers publish 74 special *Working Women's Supplements* every week. The Central Department publishes a weekly *Bulletin* which contains all the instructions and resolutions of the department, the study programmes for use both with women delegates and in party schools, the theses that are to serve for propaganda work, and other guidelines and instructions. The department also publishes a monthly political magazine, *Kommunistka* (Communist Woman), and

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* Work among the women of the Eastern nationalities is still only beginning in Soviet Russia, and Comrade Ye. D. Stassova is one of those who initiated this work. At present women's departments are operating in all the eastern regions of the Republic of working people, and in all the provinces that have an Eastern population.

The First All-Russia Conference of Women Communists from the Soviet East was held on 1 April, 1921.

a special pamphlet which provides material for reproduction in the various local editions of the *Working Women's Supplement*.

The Central Department also has a literature board which plans the publication of brochures, pamphlets and appeals. Over the last year the Central Department has issued over 20 brochures, books on the protection of female labour, a report on the First Conference of Women Communists, a number of appeals and leaflets related to political and state campaigns.

The education of the masses in the party spirit completes and resumes the Soviet experience gained by broad masses of women workers – with the active and direct co-operation of housewives and peasant women – in Soviet construction. At present, the practical communist education of the masses both by the party and by the women's departments is being directed towards the spheres of economic construction and the revival of production.

As one of the urgent tasks now facing the Soviet Republic is the revival of production and the organisation of the national economy on communist principles, the active involvement of women in this work is now a matter of particular importance.

The transition in Soviet Russia to universal labour conscription represented a historic turning point in the position of women. The new system of organising labour based: 1) on a rigorous assessment and rational distribution of all the existing labour reserves of the republic, including women; 2) on the transition from family consumption and individual economic units to collective production and consumption, and 3) on a unified and regulated economic plan, has radically altered the basis upon which rested the former enslavement and dependence of women. The summons of all to the labour front without distinction of sex is changing the entire traditional picture of life and relations between the sexes. The former dependence of women on the capitalist boss and husband cum bread-winner has disappeared. There is now one master, whom the working man and the working woman must both equally obey in the interests of the whole working class – the Soviet Republic of Working People.

The role played by women workers and peasants in the organisation of the national economy on communist principles is becoming more and more important. As the working men have been drawn to the Red front, working

women in Russia have become firmly established on the labour front, the economic front. According to the figures of the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions, which are far from complete, of the 5.5 million workers in trade unions, the majority in a number of major branches of industry are women...

At the same time, there is no trade union that does not number women among its members, and no branch of work in which women are not involved. However, despite the fact that female labour is widely used in Soviet Russia, and that women workers outnumber men workers in many branches of production, the number of women workers in the various organs of production management, from factory committees and commissions to the central organs of economic management, is still very small. The plenum of the Petrograd Soviet, for example, consists of 135 working men, but only 25 working women. Of the 194 members of management organs supervising the textile workers' trade union in 38 provinces, only 10 are women. An exception to this rule is Kostroma, where women constitute a majority in the trade union management. In factory management, particularly with the transition to one-man management, women are a rarity, with the exception of the clothing industry and certain textile combines where women workers are members of the management organs. Women are in the minority at trade union congresses, and there are even fewer women at national economic congresses, and in central organs of management.

What is the cause of this phenomenon, and what does it tell us? One of the reasons for this lack of activity on the part of women workers in the organisation of production is the fact that the women's departments of the party have only recently set themselves the task of shifting the emphasis of their work from involving women in the construction of Soviet institutions to involving them in the rehabilitation of the national economy. This appeal was launched only this winter, and was clearly formulated for the first time at the Third All-Russia Conference of Provincial Women's Departments in December, 1920. It was then confirmed at the Eighth Congress of Soviets with the adoption of the resolution on involving women workers in all organs of management and in the organisation of the national economy. There can be no doubt that, with the increasing activity of the women's departments within the trade unions,

and with the use of production propaganda not only to raise labour productivity, but also to involve women equally with men in the organisation of new forms of production, the number of women workers becoming active builders of the national economy will increase as rapidly and consistently as it is doing in the other spheres of activity connected with the reconstruction of life on new principles.

With the assistance of organisers specifically chosen to work among women in trade unions, with the help of production conferences and the skilful involvement of women workers in trade union efforts to improve working conditions at the factories for both men and women workers, we may confidently hope that the two-million-strong army of women workers can be moulded into steadfast and conscious builders of communist forms of production.

Without the participation of women workers and peasants, victory on the labour front is impossible. On the other hand, however, the complete and actual emancipation of the 70 million women of the working republic is equally impossible without the introduction and implementation of the principles of the communist economic system and the transformation of life according to new principles. The great change brought about by the Russian proletarian revolution in the hearts and minds of the workers of both sexes makes it easier to draw the broad mass of women workers and peasants into every sphere of public and economic life. That mustering of forces made necessary by the protracted civil war has steeled the will of the workers of both sexes, and has taught them to follow Marx's behest – that their liberation can only be achieved by their own efforts. It is now not individuals, but masses of women workers who are joining in the task of constructing the Soviet Republic. As yet, the peasant woman is only timidly following in their wake. The women among the urban poor have become conscious of their rights and have bound their future to the future of communism. The party's task is to find the way to the mind and heart of the peasant woman.

After the peasant woman comes the 'last slave', the woman of the East, awakening from age-old slavery. The women's departments are vigorously pursuing their work in every area with the population of the peoples of the East and in all the eastern republics of Soviet Russia, in order to rally the forces of Muslim and mountain women around the banner of communism and Soviet power.

A start has also been made in the work among women engaged in non-physical labour: teachers, office workers, medical personnel, telephonists and telegraph operators.

On looking back over what has been done during these revolutionary years to organise women around the banner of communism, one cannot but note with deep satisfaction the enormous successes achieved in this difficult and painstaking work. There is now no sphere of Soviet life into which women of the working class have not been drawn. Yesterday's woman worker or peasant is today in charge of army political sections, is transport commissar, organises public catering, heads the department for the protection of motherhood, is in charge of social education, organises reading rooms, supervises canteens, joins the food detachments, and is actively engaged in all political campaigns and all the initiatives undertaken by the republic to combat the collapse of the economy, starvation and epidemics. The woman worker is the soul of the subbotniks, and wherever her duties and obligations call her, she is a full and equal citizen.

During the four years of the revolution, the movement of women workers has changed from being spontaneous, unorganised, amateurish and disunited to become a large-scale, systematic and organised phenomenon. It is increasingly clear and indisputable that, without close co-operation on the part of the women, the proletariat will not be able to fulfil its great class task. The party as a whole must now consider how to make wide-ranging and skilful use of this female force. The departments of women workers now face the task of enriching the construction of the new society by bringing to the fore those urgent and immediate issues which primarily affect women, and whose solution will deliver the final blow to their recent enslavement by the family and the outdated morals of the bourgeois world.

The proletarian revolution has achieved its objective. All arguments about the inequality of women have been swept into the past. The October Revolution has created a solid basis for the comprehensive emancipation of women...

A. M. Kollontai,
The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia,
Gosizdat, 1921,
abridged

What Has the October Revolution Done for Women in the West?

October 1927

What the October Revolution has achieved in terms of the emancipation of working women in the Soviet Union is well known to all, is clear and indisputable. However, what effect has the Great October Revolution had on the movement for the emancipation of women in other, bourgeois countries abroad? What has it contributed to the creation of the 'new woman' involved in the tasks and aspirations of the working class?

World war, which, in Europe and North America, *drew* enormous numbers of women from the poorer sections of the population, and those with *moderate means* into the whirlpool of production and state administration, undoubtedly served to advance considerably the cause of female emancipation. The rapid growth of female labour brought with it unparalleled changes in family life, and in the overall mode of life of women in bourgeois countries. However, this process of female emancipation would scarcely have advanced any further, without the powerful example of the October Revolution. The October Revolution helped to bring about a new evaluation of women, to reveal and confirm the view of women as socially useful labour units. From the very first days of the October Revolution it became clear that women's energies are needed not only by the husband and the family, as had been thought for thousands of years, but also by society, the whole social collective, the state.

However, that this phenomenon is an inevitable historical fact, that the formation of a new type of woman is linked to a general shift towards the creation of a new, working society, is something that the bourgeoisie cannot and does not wish to recognise. If it were not for the October Revolution, it would still be generally believed that the woman earning her own living is a temporary phenomenon, and that the woman's place is in the family, standing at the back of her husband bread-winner. The October Revolution

changed many concepts. This radical change in the evaluation of the tasks and vocation of women in the Soviet Union has affected the attitude to women far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. We can now meet the new woman everywhere, in every corner of the world. The new woman is a mass phenomenon, with the exception, perhaps, of women in the semi-colonial and colonial countries, where the development of the productive forces is impeded by the predatory rule of the imperialists. However even there, given the struggle for national self-determination and against imperialism, the new woman is being moulded in the very process of struggle. It is impossible to succeed in the struggle between social groups and classes without the co-operation of women.

The new woman is essentially an independent labour unit whose energy is used not to serve the interests of a private family economy, but to perform socially useful and necessary labour. She is being liberated from those inner moral characteristics which marked the woman of the past. Female triviality, conservatism and restricted range of ideas, her envy and malice towards other women as rivals in the hunt for a provider – all these characteristics are no longer necessary in that sphere where she is now struggling to survive. As soon as the woman starts to live by her own work, she needs to develop different qualities and acquire new habits, and millions of working women throughout the world are hastening to morally re-arm themselves.

It is interesting to observe how, not only in our country but also abroad, women are learning to be efficient and workers whose labour is necessary. They are fully aware that their own well-being, and often also the existence of their children, depends directly on them, on their work and qualifications. Externally and internally they are adapting to the new conditions in which they live. Internally, psychologically, they are ceasing to be those patient, obedient beings who gave themselves wholly to husband and family. Now women have no time to be 'sentimental', and even less can they be 'obedient' and patient. It is more important that they be sure of their own strength, resolute in their actions, and not distracted by their emotions...

In addition to their efficiency and their attempts, by raising their *qualifications* and improving their *health* and physical strength, to increase their value on the labour market, the new working women differ from the women of the past also

in their strong feelings for and consciousness of their links with their class, with the collective. Women are involved in politics and, once again, if war drew large numbers of women into the political struggle, it was only the October Revolution which recognised publicly, by its laws, by the entire practice of the new Soviet system, that once the woman is working in and for society, she should be recognised as an active citizen. The enormous shift in the position of women in the Soviet Union has encouraged contending social groups to attempt to draw women onto their side. Everywhere, in every country, the political activity of women has shown unprecedented growth over the last ten years. Women are becoming members of government (Bang in Denmark – minister of education; Margaret Bondfield in the Ramsay MacDonald cabinet in Britain), they are entering the diplomatic corps and becoming the inspirational force behind major revolutionary movements (as for example Sun Tsin-lin, the wife of Sun Yat-sen). Women are learning to head departments, to take charge of economic organisations, to guide policy.

Would this have been possible without the Great October Revolution? Could the new woman-citizen and socially useful worker have emerged without the great whirlwind that blew across the world? Could the working women of other countries have taken such giant strides towards their own comprehensive emancipation without the October Revolution? Anyone who pauses to think realises that the answer is clearly no. This is why working women throughout the world cannot but feel that this tenth anniversary of the October Revolution is the great festival of workers of the world.

The October Revolution affirmed the importance of working women. The October Revolution has created those conditions which will ensure victory for the 'new woman'.

Magazine *Ogonyok*, No. 41,
9 October, 1927,
abridged

The Soviet Woman – a Full and Equal Citizen of Her Country[56]

September 1946

It is a well-known fact that the Soviet Union has achieved exceptional successes in drawing women into the active construction of the state. This generally accepted truth is not disputed even by our enemies. The Soviet woman is a full and equal citizen of her country. In opening up to women access to every sphere of creative activity, our state has simultaneously ensured all the conditions necessary for her to fulfil her natural obligation – that of being a mother bringing up her children and mistress of her home.

From the very beginning, Soviet law recognised that motherhood is not a private matter, but the social duty of the active and equal woman citizen. This proposition is enshrined in the Constitution. The Soviet Union has solved one of the most important and complex of problems – how to make active use of female labour in any area without this being to the detriment of motherhood.

A great deal of attention has been given to the organisation of public canteens, kindergartens, Young Pioneer camps, playgrounds and crèches – those institutions which, as Lenin wrote, facilitate in practice the emancipation of women and are able, in practice, to reduce the female inequality vis-à-vis men. More than seven thousand women's and children's consultation centres have been established in the USSR, of which half are in rural areas. Over 20 thousand crèches have been organised. It should be pointed out here that in tsarist Russia in 1913 there existed only 19 crèches and 25 kindergartens, and even these were not maintained by the state, but by philanthropic organisations.

The Soviet state provides increasing material assistance to mothers. Women receive allowances and paid leave before and after the birth of the child and their post is kept open for them until they return from leave.

Large and one-parent families receive state allowances to help them provide for and bring up their children. In 1945

the state paid out more than two thousand million roubles in such allowances. The title 'Mother-Heroine' has been awarded to more than 10 thousand women in the RSFSR alone, while the order of 'Maternal Glory' and the 'Medal of Motherhood' have been awarded to 1,100 thousand women.

Soviet women have justified the trust and concern shown to them by their state. They have shown a high degree of heroism both in peaceful, creative labour before the war, during the years of armed battle against the nazi invaders, and now, in the efforts to fulfil the monumental tasks set by the new five-year plan. Many branches of industry in which female labour is predominant are among the first to fulfil their plans. Equally worthy of mention are the enormous achievements of the Soviet peasant women, who bore on their shoulders the greater part of the burden of agricultural labour during the war years.

Our women have mastered professions that have long been considered the exclusive domain of men. There are women engine-drivers, women mechanics, women lathe operators, women fitters, well-qualified women workers in charge of the most complex mechanisms.

The women of the Soviet Union work on an equal footing with men to advance science, culture and the arts; they occupy an outstanding place in the national education and health services.

In a country where, 30 years ago, out of 2,300 thousand working women 1,300 thousand worked as servants in the towns and 750 thousand as farm labourers in the countryside, in a country where there were almost no women engineers, almost no scientists, and appointment to a teaching post was accompanied by conditions insulting to female dignity, in that country there are now 750 thousand women teachers, 100 thousand women doctors, and 250 thousand women engineers. Women make up one half of the student body in institutions of higher education. Over 33 thousand women are working in laboratories and in research institutes, 25 thousand women have academic titles and degrees, and 166 women have been awarded the State Prize for their achievements in science and work.

The women of the Soviet Union are implementing their political rights in practice. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR has 277 women deputies, while 256 thousand women have been elected to rural, urban, regional and republican organs of state power...

The women of the Soviet Union do not have to demand from their government the right to work, the right to education, the right to the protection of motherhood. The state itself, the government itself, draws women into work, giving them wide access to every sphere of social life, assisting and rewarding mothers.

During the years of invasion by nazi aggressors, Soviet women, and the women of other democratic countries, saw with their own eyes the need to wage a tireless battle against nazism until every trace of it had been removed. Only this will spare the world the threat of new wars.

The struggle for democracy and lasting peace, the struggle against reaction and fascism, is the main task we face today. To cut women off from this basic and important task, to attempt to confine them within 'purely female', feminist organisations, can only weaken the women's democratic movement. Only the victory of democracy can ensure women equality.

We, the women of the Land of Soviets, are devoting all our energy to creative labour, to the fulfilment of the monumental tasks set by the five-year plan, knowing that in so doing we are strengthening the bulwark of peace throughout the world – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

At the same time we must be on the alert for intrigues by the reactionaries and expose their plans and intentions, their attempts to divide the ranks of democracy.

The unity of all the forces of democracy is our most reliable weapon in the struggle against reaction, in the struggle for freedom and peace throughout the world.

Sovetskaya zhenshchina,
(Soviet Woman), No. 5,
September-October, 1946,
pp. 3-4,
abridged

COMMENTARY

[1] The book *The Social Basis of the Women's Question* (approximately 450 pages) was written shortly before the First All-Russia Women's Congress, and published in St Petersburg in 1909. In it, Alexandra Kollontai provides a detailed analysis of this issue from a Marxist point of view. After a general survey of the question in the introduction, the author, basing herself on considerable factual material, examines and proffers a solution to such problems as the struggle for women's economic independence, marriage and the family, protection for expectant and nursing mothers, etc. The author devotes a large part of her book to the issue of the women's struggle for political rights.

[2] *Feminism* – a bourgeois women's movement which sought equal rights for women within the framework of the bourgeois state. The feminists demanded that women be accorded the right to elect and be elected, the right to engage in commerce and business operations.

[3] *The Alliance for Female Equality* – a feminist organisation formed in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. The alliance demanded that women be given political equality and the right to enter various professions. The Alliance was dissolved after the defeat of the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907.

The Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society – a bourgeois women's organisation which was founded in 1899 and was exclusively of a charitable-cultural nature. Its members came from the intelligentsia – teachers, physicians, translators, etc., and it disseminated its ideas through such magazines as *Zhenskoye Dyelo* (The Women's Cause) and *Soyuz Zhenshchin* (The Women's Alliance).

[4] *The First All-Russia Women's Congress*, organised by bourgeois societies, took place in St Petersburg from 10 to 16 December, 1908. It was attended by 700 delegates, including

a group of 45 women workers. The feminists, who organised the congress, intended to conduct it under the slogan: 'The women's movement should not be either bourgeois or proletarian, but a single movement animated by one spirit.' In their speeches, the women worker delegates exposed the class-opposite nature of the proletarian and the bourgeois women's movements. Despite the fact that they were in the minority, the women worker delegates were able to persuade the congress to adopt resolutions on the protection of female and child labour, on the protection of peasant mothers, and others. The women workers also introduced a resolution demanding universal, equal, direct and secret voting rights. The presidium refused to put foreward this resolution, and replaced it with another, drawn up in the liberal-bourgeois spirit. The group of women-worker delegates then left the congress in protest.

Kollontai was one of the organisers in charge of preparatory work with the women worker delegates prior to the congress, in which she herself took an active part. A speech which she had prepared was read at the congress by V. I. Volkova, a woman worker, as Kollontai had been forced to flee abroad as a result of police surveillance.

[5]This is a reference to the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861 bv the tsarist government, which was compelled to introduce this reform as a result of economic development within the country, and the increase of large-scale peasant actions caused by landowner exploitation of peasant serfs. The objective result of the 'Peasant Reform' was, as Lenin wrote, the replacement of one form of exploitation by another, the replacement of serfdom by capitalism.

[6] *Raznochintsy*–people from various social strata who, having acquired education, changed their previous social milieu, that of low-ranking civil servants, the petty bourgeosie, merchants, clergy and peasants. With the development of capitalism, the number of *raznochintsy* increased. Lenin described them as 'the educated representatives of the liberal and democratic bourgeoisie'.

[7] This is a reference to 9 January, 1905, when tsarist troops fired on a peaceful demonstration by workers who were taking a petition to the tsar. More than one thousand people were killed, and two thousand were wounded. This marked the beginning of the first bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia of 1905-1907.

[8] *The Union of Unions* – a political organisation set up by the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia in May, 1905, at the first congress of representatives of 14 unions: lawyers, writers, physicians, engineers, teachers and others. The congress demanded that a Constituent Assembly be convened on the basis of universal suffrage.

In the spring of 1906, the Women's Progressive Party was formed from among the right wing of the Union of Unions, and became the mouthpiece for the demands and requirements of women from the big bourgeoisie. The party programme was clearly feminist in orientation. The Union of Unions was dissolved at the end of 1906.

[9] *The Party of Peaceful Renovation* – a moderate-liberal party. Its main aims were: a legal 'solution' to the labour problem, and the resettlement of peasants with insufficient land. In 1907 the Party of Peaceful Renovation merged with the Party of Democratic Reforms.

[10] *The Trudoviks* – a group of petty-bourgeois democrats formed in April, 1906, from among the peasant delegates to the First State Duma (a representative legislative institution set up by the tsar following the 1905-1907 revolution). The Trudoviks demanded the abolition of all estate and national restrictions, the democratisation of the Zemstvo and city self-administration, and the introduction of universal suffrage for elections to the State Duma. The group existed up to 1917.

[11] This is a reference to the Seventh International Congress of the Second International, held in Stuttgart on 18-24 August, 1907. The congress was attended by delegates from 25 countries, including Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, England, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Russia and the USA – 886 delegates in all. The Bolshevik delegation was led by Lenin, who did a great deal of work to consolidate the left-wing forces of international Social-Democracy. The congress adopted a resolution committing socialists to oppose the approaching war.

[12] In 1907, just before the opening of the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, the First International Conference of Socialist Women was held, attended by 58 women delegates from 14 countries. The main aim of the conference was to formulate one united tactic for all the Socialist parties in the campaign to win voting rights for women workers as part of universal and equal voting rights for both sexes.

[13] *The Social-Democratic Federation* – founded in England in 1884, declared itself a socialist organisation, but did not recognise Marxism. It had no contact with the workers and was extremely sectarian in nature. In 1907 it was renamed the Social-Democratic Party.

[14] *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) – a Social-Democratic bi-monthly magazine issued by the women's proletarian movement in Germany. It was published from 1890 to 1925, and was edited by Clara Zetkin from 1892 to 1917.

[15] *The Independent Labour Party* – founded in England in 1893. Its aims were to secure the election of workers to Parliament in order to pursue its own independent policies, to campaign for the nationalisation of land and the means of production, and also to work within the trade unions. It soon lost its militant spirit under the influence of bourgeois fellow-travellers, and its leadership became opportunist. *The Fabian Society* – founded in England in 1884 by representatives of the bourgeois intelligentsia. The Fabians rejected class struggle, and proposed a programme of state or municipal 'socialism', hoping to transform capitalist society into a socialist society by means of gradual reform.

[16] Cf. the speech delivered by Clara Zetkin at the Seventh International Socialist Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart, August, 1907.

[17] This is a reference to the creation during the Women's Conference at Stuttgart of an International Women's Secretariat, headed by Clara Zetkin. The work of the Secretariat was to include gathering information on women's movements and on the leadership of the women's socialist movement.

[18] The Second International Conference of Socialist Women was held on 26-27 August, 1910, prior to the opening of the Eighth International Congress of the Second International in Copenhagen (28 August – 3 September, 1910).

[19] *Suffragettes* – members of a bourgeois women's movement seeking voting rights for women. The suffragettes adopted a tactic of obstruction, organised street demonstrations, and caused disruption of every kind. The suffragettes did not seek the support of working women.

[20] Cf. the resolutions adopted at the International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen, 25-26 August, 1910,

and the Reports to thc International Socialist Congress.

[21]A reference to the Fourth Socialist Conference of German Women, which was held in Mannheim on 22-23 September, 1906, and attended by 50 women delegates and 5 women socialists from other countries, including Alexandra Kollontai. The agenda included: the campaign for voting rights for women, propaganda work among rural women, involving domestic servants in the women's movement, etc. On all these issues resolutions were adopted which called for an intensification of the struggle for women's rights and the satisfaction of their demands.

[22]In addition to the resolutions listed above, the international women's conference in Copenhagen also decided to declare 8 March the International Day of Working Women, and to mark it every year as the day of international solidarity among the female proletariat in their struggle for equal economic and political rights. The first International Women's Day was held in 1911 in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Denmark under the slogan 'Voting rights for women workers so as to unite forces in the struggle for socialism'.

[23]It had been planned to convene the third international women's conference in 1914 in Vienna, but this was prevented by the outbreak of the First World War.

[24]Alexandra Kollontai was invited to Stockholm by the Swedish League of Socialist Youth and the left wing of the Swedish Social-Democratic Party to address a meeting held to mark May Day. The meeting was held outdoors, in a large field at Gardet, before an audience of thousands. The famous philologist, Doctor Hannes Skjöld, interpreted Kollantai's speech into Swedish, and it was his interpretation that was no doubt used as the basis of the text published in the Swedish press.

[25]This is a reference to the so-called Agadir crisis in Morocco in 1911, when a German gunboat entered a French port, causing a further deterioration in relations between the two countries and bringing them to the brink of war. The Moroccan crises seriously affected international relations on the eve of the First World War; they constituted a trial of strength between the two imperialist blocs. Lenin numbered the Moroccan crises among the 'chief crises in the international policy of the great powers after 1870-71' (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 39, p. 686).

[26]The article 'Women's Day' by Alexandra Kollontai was

published in the newspaper *Pravda* one week before the first-ever celebration in Russia of the Day of International Solidarity among the Female Proletariat on 23 February (8 March), 1913. In St Petersburg this day was marked by a call for a campaign against women workers' lack of economic and political rights, for the unity of the working class, and for the awakening of self-consciousness among women workers.

[27]This is a reference to the Extraordinary International Socialist Congress of the Second International, convened in Basle on 24-25 November, 1912. The congress was called in order to consider ways of opposing the approaching threat of world imperialist war, and was attended by 555 delegates. The congress adopted a manifesto opposing war. The leaders of the Second International, who had voted for the adoption of the manifesto, subsequently betrayed it after the First World War began and supported their own imperialist governments.

[28] The Vienna congress of the Second International was to take place in the summer of 1914. This congress was seen as particularly significant as the date when it was to be held coincided with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the First International, and the 25th anniversary of the Second International. The congress agenda was to include the most important issues relating to the position of the working class and its struggle against imperialism, the problems of war and militarism in the context of the tragic international tension that existed in the middle of 1914. The outbreak of war prevented the socialists from holding the Vienna congress.

[29]*German Social-Democracy*–the leading party in the Second International–abandoned the interests of the proletariat as soon as war was declared and defended its own imperialist fatherland. On 4 August, 1914, the Social-Democratic faction within the Reichstag voted with the bourgeois parties to allocate 5,000 million marks to the Kaiser's government for military expenditure.

[30]*Sotsial-Demokrat*–an illegal newspaper and the main press organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, published from February, 1908, to December, 1913, and again from November, 1914, to January, 1917. During the war, the newspaper restarted publication with No. 33, which came out on 1 November, 1914. Its lead article 'The War and Russian Social-Democracy', was written by Lenin and was the manifesto of the Central Committee of the RSDLP. This is the article referred to here by Kollontai.

[31]The correspondence between Lenin and Kollontai began in the first months of the war. The earliest surviving letters from Kollontai to Lenin are dated October-November, 1914. Lenin was very pleased that Kollontai shared the views of the Bolsheviks.

[32]At the end of November, 1914, the Swedish government expelled Kollontai 'permanently' from Sweden. The reason given was her participation in the campaign organised by the left wing of Swedish Social-Democracy to reveal the imperialist nature of the war. On 28 November, 1914, in a letter to Lenin, Kollontai explained the reason for her expulsion from Sweden as follows: 'Officially, my arrest and expulsion are the result of my article published in the anti-militarist Swedish "youth" magazine and entitled "On the War and Our Tasks". However, it would seem that the real reason was my speech on the same theme delivered at a closed party meeting. Anyway, I delivered the speech on Monday, and by Friday I was arrested, dragged from jail to jail (Stockholm and Malmö) and then sent under police escort to Copenhagen.'

[33] The correspondence between Lenin and Kollontai can be found in the *Complete Works of V.I. Lenin*, Vol. 49 (Russ. ed.), which contains 21 letters from Lenin to Kollontai, and also in the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, which contain over 30 letters from Kollontai to Lenin and Krupskaya.

[34]During preparations for the Zimmerwald Conference, at Lenin's request, Kollontai translated into Norwegian and Swedish the draft declaration that had been prepared for the conference, organised discussion of the draft declaration at a meeting of Norwegian left-wing Social-Democrats, and obtained their agreement in principle to Lenin's draft. The Swedish left-wing Social-Democrats later joined the Norwegians. Commenting on this, Lenin wrote: 'We are very glad about the statement by the Norwegians and your efforts with the Swedes.' (*Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 200). The Norwegian declaration, which Kollontai forwarded to Lenin, is now kept in the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

[35]The brochure *Who Needs the War?* was written by Kollontai in the summer of 1915, in Norway, and edited by Lenin in Switzerland. The comments and corrections made by Lenin show the close attention he paid to every word and

phrase in this brochure, rendering some of its propositions more precise and more profound.

[36] *Vorwärts* (Forward) – a daily newspaper, the central organ of the German Social-Democratic Party, published from 1891 to 1953. During the First World War it adopted a social-chauvinist position, and after the Great October Socialist Revolution it conducted anti-Soviet propaganda.

[37] Kollontai began work on her book *Society and Motherhood* long before the outbreak of the First World War, after the Social-Democratic faction in the Third State Duma requested her to write a section on maternity insurance to be included in draft legislation on labour insurance. By the beginning of 1914 the work was completed and given to the St Petersburg publishing house Zhizn i Znaniye (Life and Knowledge), run by the Bolshevik historian and writer, Vladimir Dmitriyevich Bonch-Bruyevich. It was published in 1916. The book is almost 650 pages long and is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the main issues involved: the reasons for state maternity insurance, the causes of the falling birth-rate, the effects of the living conditions of the working class and of female labour on infant mortality, the types and forms of maternity insurance. In a voluminous appendix, the author quotes the maternity insurance laws of 14 countries, the resolutions adopted on this subject at conferences of women socialists, a wide range of statistical material, and a large bibliography which includes reference sources in six European languages.

[38] Kollontai first went to America on the invitation of the German (left-wing) section of the American Socialist Party, which invited her to anti-war lectures. She stayed in America from October, 1915, to the end of February, 1916, visiting over 80 cities and townships, and reading 123 papers in four languages. During this first propaganda visit to America, Kollontai carried out a number of special tasks given her by Lenin.

Kollontai paid her second visit to America in September, 1916, and stayed until January, 1917. She was actively involved in the American socialist movement, and also engaged in literary work.

[39] This is a reference to the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, which took place on 23-27 February (8-12 March) 1917. This revolution was caused by the need to resolve the major problems of national economic development (the

abolition of tsarism and landed estates) and by the failure of tsarist foreign and domestic policy (military defeats, economic collapse and famine). As a result of this revolution, tsarist autocracy was abolished and a dual power emerged in the country: the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and the bourgeois Provisional Government.

[40]The February bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia began on 23 February (8 March), 1917 – on the International Day of Working Women. The Petrograd Bolsheviks used International Women's Day to organise meetings against the war, rising prices and the difficult conditions facing the woman worker. These meetings became particularly stormy on the Vyborg side of the capital, where they spontaneously developed into strikes and revolutionary demonstrations that gripped the whole of proletarian Petrograd. The demonstrators marched towards the centre of the city from the outlying worker districts; over 128 thousand workers went on strike, including a large number of women.

[41]This is a reference to the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, the first socialist revolution in history, brought about by the working class of Russia in alliance with the poorest peasants under the leadership of the Communist Party, headed by Lenin. As a result of the revolution, the government of the bourgeoisie and the landowners was overthrown, the dictatorship of the proletariat was established and the Soviet socialist state created.

[42]The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was held in Petrograd, at Smolny, on 25-27 October (7-9 November). The October armed uprising was victorious. The congress adopted the Decree on Peace and the Decree on Land and proclaimed the formation of the Republic of Soviets.

[43]*The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* – the peace treaty between Soviet Russia and the quadruple alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey) was signed on 3 March, 1918 in Brest-Litovsk. The conditions of the peace treaty were very severe for Soviet Russia: Poland, almost the whole of the Baltic region, and part of Byelorussia passed under the control of Germany and Austria-Hungary, while the Ukraine became a state dependent on Germany. The signing of the Brest peace treaty was strongly opposed by Trotsky and the anti-party group of the left Communists. Kollontai also opposed the

treaty. On 13 November, 1918, after the revolution in Germany, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee annulled the exorbitant Brest Treaty.

44 Kollontai is referring to the civil war and the foreign intervention in Russia from 1918-1920, when the workers and peasants, under the leadership of the Communist Party, had to fight internal counter-revolution and foreign intervention. In March-May, 1919, the Red Army successfully repulsed simultaneous White Guard attacks on Soviet Russia – Admiral Kolchak was advancing from the east across Siberia, General Denikin was advancing from the south, and General Yudenich from the west. The White Guard General Krasnov was ataman of the Voisko Donskoye (the forces of the Don) and commanded the White Cossack army.

45 This is a reference to the first bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia in 1905-1907, caused by the greatly aggravated contradictions between the tsarist system and society, between the landowners and the peasants, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between Russia and the oppressed non-Russian periphery. The driving forces in this revolution were the proletariat (the revolutionary vanguard), its ally, the pasantry, and the oppressed peoples of the non-Russian peripheral areas, all of whom had a vital interest in the complete abolition of the tsarist autocracy and the survivals of serfdom. The landowners strove to preserve the tsarist autocracy. The big bourgeoisie constituted a moderate opposition, while the liberal bourgeoisie (composed mainly of the intelligentsia) was more radical. In the course of the revolution, the bourgeoisie began to favour an agreement with the tsar against the people. Although the revolution was defeated, it was of great importance in the class education of the working-class masses, and prepared the way for further class battles, becoming, in the words of Lenin, 'a dress rehearsal' for the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917.

46 *The Shidlovsky Commission* – a special government commission 'for the immediate clarification of the causes of worker dissatisfaction' was set up on 29 January, 1905, following Bloody Sunday and a wave of strikes throughout the country. The commission was headed by the tsarist official, senator and member of the State Council, N. V. Shidlovsky. The tsarist government set up this commission in order to distract the workers from revolutionary struggle. The

Bolsheviks used the elections to the commission to expose government manoeuvres and to educate the masses politically. On 20 February, 1905, the commission was dissolved.

[47]The First State Duma was convened on 27 April (10 May), 1906, on the proposal of Witte, chairman of the Council of Ministers. Unlike the former consultative Duma, swept away by the all-Russia political strike in October, 1905, the new State Duma was accorded legislative functions in conformity with the tsar's Manifesto of 17 October. The issues discussed at Duma sessions icluded the inviolability of the individual, the abolition of the death penalty, freedom of conscience and of assembly, the equality of all citizens, etc. The draft legislation on these issues introduced mainly by the Cadets (the party of the big bourgeoisie) was essentially made up of 'repressive Bills *against* free speech, against freedom of assembly, and against the other good things' (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 88). The Duma was unable to find a solution to the main problem – the agrarian problem. The tsarist government gave its total support to the inviolability of landed estates. On 8 (21) July, 1906, the Duma was disbanded.

[48]The Second State Duma met on 20 February (5 March), 1907. The Bolsheviks used the Duma to expose tsarism and the treacherous role of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, to proclaim and disseminate the revolutionary programme of the party, to free the peasantry from the influence of the liberals and to set up within the Duma a revolutionary bloc of representatives of the working class and the peasantry. On 3 (26) June, 1907, the tsarist government dissolved the Second State Duma and arrested the Social-Democtratic Duma faction.

[49]The First All-Russia Congress of Women Workers, convened by the Central Committee of the RCP (B), was held in Moscow on 16-21 November, 1918. It was attended by 1,147 women delegates from factories, plants, and from among the rural poor. On 19 November, Lenin delivered a speech to the congress in which he emphasised the enormous importance of women workers in the revolutionary movement and in the construction of the new society. (Cf. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, pp. 180-181)). Speeches were also delivered by Ulyanova-Yelizarova, Nogin, Yaroslavsky, Armand, Samoilova, Stal, Kollontai and others. The congress called on women workers to defend Soviet power, and adopted resolutions on measures related to work among women. The

congress marked the beginning of the organisation of women workers and peasants.

Kollontai spoke of this event at a meeting of congress delegates, held in the Lenin Museum on 5 September, 1946, and the record of this meeting was first published in 1963 in the book *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Reminiscences. 1900-1922.*

[50] The Second International Conference of Women Communists took place in Moscow on 9-15 June, 1921, attended by delegates from 21 countries. At the conference Kollontai gave a report on the forms and methods of work used by Communist Parties among women workers. The conference also discussed such questions as the participation of women in the struggle to establish and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and in economic construction, and the strengthening of international links among departments of work among women.

[51]This is a reference to the conference of Petrograd women workers, which was held on 12-15 November, 1917. This was the first non-party workers' conference convened on the initiative of a Bolshevik organisation. The conference discussed the issue of the Constituent Assembly, the activity of the city self-administration, the tasks facing the women's movement and the situation in the provinces.

[52]*Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker) – a legal Bolshevik magazine and the press organ of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks), founded on Lenin's initiative. It was published in St Petersburg from 23 February (8 March) to 26 June (9 July) 1914, and publication was restarted in May, 1917, and continued until January, 1918.

[53]This is a reference to the period following the February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917 in Russia, and to the so-called 'dual power' (cf. No 39). From March, 1917, the Socialist-Revolutionary Kerensky was a member of the Provisional Government, first as minister for justice and then as minister for defence and for the navy; then, from July, as minister-chairman, and finally as commander-in-chief. After the October Revolution, he organised an uprising against Soviet power. In 1918 he emigrated, lived in France and the USA and launched a vigorous anti-Soviet campaign.

[54]The Commissions for Propaganda Among Women Workers were created following a directive issued by the

Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in December, 1918. In September, 1919, these commissions were turned into women's departments. When the women's departments had fulfilled their role, and party organisations began to conduct systematic political and cultural work among the broad mass of women workers and peasants, the women's departments were dissolved by a decision of the party Central Committee.

[55] The Red Guards was the name given to armed detachments of workers which began to be formed in March, 1917, at various enterprises under the leadership of Bolsheviks. They constituted the main strike force of the October Revolution. In March, 1918, they became part of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants (that was how the Soviet Army was called from 1918 to 1944).

[56]Thirty-seven years have passed since this article was written, and during this time the Soviet state has pursued a policy of genuine female equality and the protection of motherhood, achieving new and major successes in the socio-political development of women workers, women collective farmers and women members of the intelligentsia. The Constitution of the USSR, adopted at an extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 7 October, 1977, declares: 'Women and men have equal rights in the USSR.'

The practical implementation of these rights is ensured by according women equal opportunities with men in the spheres of education and professional training, in work, in remuneration for work and in promotion, in socio-political and cultural activity. It is also ensured by special measures to protect female labour and women's health, by the creation of conditions which allow women to combine work with motherhood, by legal protection and material and moral support for mother and child, including paid leave and other privileges for pregnant women and for mothers, by the gradual reduction of the working day for women with small children.

The conditions obtaining under developed socialism offer women broad opportunities for participating in every sphere of creative labour, scientific creativity, culture, etc. Of all the specialists in the country working in the national economy, 59 per cent are women, many of whom occupy managerial and executive posts. Of all those engaged in scientific work, 40 per cent are women. The number of women in public education and the health services is particularly high. Of 893 thousand

doctors, 600.6 thousand are women, while two-thirds of the teaching staff in schools is made up of women.

Socialism has enabled women to participate on a mass scale in social and political life and state management. Over 4 million women are members of the CPSU. In the Supreme Soviet there are 487 women, which is almost one-third of its membership. More than 1,130 thousand of the best daughters of the nation have been elected as deputies to the Supreme Soviets of Union and autonomous republics and local Soviets.

Much has also been achieved in the protection of mother and child. The network of special state institutions is constantly growing. The number of hospital beds available for expectant and nursing mothers is now 224.2 thousand, and the number of women's consultation centres, children's clinics and health centres is 529 thousand. Around 100 thousand paediatricians keep a regular check on the health of mother and child.

At present, 13 million children are looked after in over 120 thousand crèches and kindergartens. In urban areas every second child up to the age of seven, and in rural areas every fourth child, attends pre-school institutions. Every year 450-500 roubles is spent to provide for one child at a kindergarten or crèche, and 80 per cent of this expenditure is borne by the state.

SOME IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

*(1872-1952)**

1872

19 March A daughter, Alexandra, is born in St Petersburg to Mikhail Domontovich, a titled landowner, and his wife.

1888

Alexandra passes her school-leaving examinations and is qualified to teach. She attends private courses and lectures on history and literature.

1892

She makes her first trip abroad with her family, visiting Berlin and Paris, and makes her first acquaintance with Marxist literature (The *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and others). She begins to attend socialist meetings.

1893

She marries V. L. Kollontai.

1895

She begins work, under the guidance of Maria Strakhova, in the Mobile Museum of Teaching Aids, run by the famous Russian bibliographer and writer, Nikolai Rubakin. The start of her friendship with Yelena Stassova. She takes part in the work of the Red Cross, helping political prisoners and establishing contact with prominent members of the People's Will group such as Vera Figner and Nikolai Morozov, imprisoned in the Schlüsselburg fortress.

1896

Spring Alexandra visits Narva, where she learns about the life of working men and women employed at one of the largest factories in Russia–the Krenholm textile works–with over 12 thousand workers.

24 May-17 June During the famous textile workers' strike in St Petersburg, Alexandra Kollontai organises collections to help the strikers, distributes leaflets appealing to the workers to stand firm and organise themselves.

* Up to 1918 the dates are given according to the Old Style.

1898

13 August Alexandra Kollontai leaves her husband and goes to Switzerland, where she studies the social and economic sciences at the faculty of economics and statistics at Zurich University.

September Publication of the first literary work written by Alexandra Kollontai – *Fundamentals of Upbringing According to Dobrolyubov.*

1899

Summer She leaves for London to study the English workers' movement.

Autumn Returns to St Petersburg.
Speaks against the Russian revisionists and their ideological leader, Pyotr Struve, at an evening organised at the house of Yelena Stassova to aid the Red Cross. This was Kollontai's first clash with the revisionists, her political baptism of fire.

Winter She begins underground revolutionary work.

1900

Kollontai's first articles – on Finland – are published in the German economics journal *Social Practice.*

1901

She goes abroad and establishes personal links with Rosa Luxemburg in Zurich, Paul and Laura Lafargue in Paris, and Karl Kautsky and Georgi Plekhanov in Geneva.

1901-1902

She undertakes considerable reserch into the Finnish question, publishing her articles under the pseudonym 'Ellen Malin'.

1903

January She delivers her first speech at an open students' meeting in St Petersburg. In it she reveals the idealist essence of the philosophy of Nietzsche, and counters idealism with the socialist world outlook.

February Publication of her book *The Life of Finnish Workers.*

Summer A short trip abroad. On returning to Russia, Alexandra Kollontai begins propaganda work, organises political discussion circles beyond Nevskaya Zastava in St Petersburg, writes appeals, keeps and distributes illegal literature. She also does a great deal of work to bring the Finnish and Russian workers' movements closer together.

10 January In one of his letters sent to Russia, Lenin suggests that Alexandra Kollontai be invited to collaborate on the newspaper *Vperyod* (Forwards), as 'we badly

need articles *on Finland*" (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 43).

November — She takes part in a student demonstration and organises food deliveries for those who are arrested. On the instructions of the Bolshevik organisation, she holds talks with the workers under the guise of giving geography lessons at an evening school sited beyond Nevskaya Zastava.

1905

9 January — Alexandra Kollontai takes part in the workers' procession to the Winter Palace.

Spring — She is actively involved in the printing and distribution by the underground movement of leaflets calling for armed struggle against tsarist autocracy.

March — She writes the leaflet "What Is the Constituent Assembly?" in the name of the St Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP of which she is the treasurer.

April — She takes part in the first women's meeting in St Petersburg, held in the hall of the Tenishevsky School. Here she delivers a speech in which she declares that women revolutionary socialists cannot co-operate with bourgeois members of the women's movement.

July — Publication of her brochure *On the Question of Class Struggle*.

September-October — With the revolutionary movement on the upsurge, Alexandra Kollontai engages in propaganda work among workers at their factories, especially at Nevskaya Zastava and in the Okhotinsky district, and on Vasilyevsky Island. She addresses packed auditoriums at the university, the Tenishevsky School, the Technological Institute, the House of the People, etc. She attends the first meeting of the St Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies at the Technological Institute.

She writes for a number of legal Marxist magazines, including *Obrazovaniye* (Education), *Fabrichny vestnik* (The Factory Herald) and *Rabochy yezhegodnik* (The Workers' Annual), and, at the request of the St Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP, tours factories and provinces making speeches.

After 8 November — At a meeting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in St Petersburg, Kollontai meets Lenin for the first time and hears him speak.

Middle of November — She meets Lenin and Krupskaya at the editorial board of the newspaper *Novaya zhizn* (New Life) and hands over to Lenin a letter from party comrades.

1906

18 January	In Vilnius Kollontai reads a paper on the subject 'The Role of Feminists and Women Workers in the Movement for Female Emancipation'. Publication of her article 'Ethics and Social-Democracy' in which she refutes the arguments put forward by the representatives of philosophical idealism, who criticised the moral principles of the Social-Democrats.
Autumn	She meets Rosa Luxemburg during a short visit to Finland Publication of a collection of her articles, under the title *Finland and Socialism.*
22-23 September	She takes part in the work of the Fourth Conference of Women Social-Democrats in Mannheim.
23-29 September	She attends the congress of the German Social-Democratic Party in Mannheim and cements her personal friendship with August Bebel, Karl Liebknecht, Clara Zetkin and other members of the German Social-Democratic Party.

1907

Spring	Alexandra Kollontai begins work in the Textile Workers' Union in St Petersburg.
17 and *19 August*	She attends the International Conference of Women Socialists in Stuttgart as a Russian representative and delivers a speech supporting Clara Zetkin on the issue of universal suffrage.
18-24 August	She attends the Seventh Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart at which she delivers a speech on the question of universal suffrage.
Autumn	On returning to Russia, she concentrates on organising the women workers of St Petersburg. She opens a legal working women's club on Predtechenskaya St under the legally acceptable name of 'The Working Women's Mutual Aid Society'.
	She delivers speeches on the feminist movement, on the tasks facing women workers, etc.

1908

Spring-Summer	In the course of preparations for the First All-Russia Women's Congress, Alexandra Kollontai works on the book *The Social Basis of the Women's Question.* When it is completed, she sends it to Maxim Gorky on Capri for comment.
September	Proceedings are instituted against Kollontai, accusing her of being a member of the Social-Democratic Party, of being the author of the book *Finland and Socialism,* and of having conducted propaganda work in the Textile

	Workers' Union. As a result, she goes underground.
October-November	A period of busy preparation for the First All-Russia Congress of Feminists to be held in St. Petersburg.
10-13 December	She attends the First All-Russia Women's Congress, which takes place in the Alexandrovsky Hall of the St Petersburg City Duma.
Night of 13 December	She is forced to flee abroad to avoid arrest, and begins life as an émigré.
	1909
January	Publication of the book *The Social Basis of the Women's Question.* Alexandra Kollontai takes up residence in Grünewald, just outside Berlin, and becomes a member of the German Social-Democratic Party, in which she works as a propagandist, a lecturer and a journalist.
April	She is sent by the German Social-Democratic Party on a tour of the towns and villages of the Rhine and the province of Pfalz to conduct propaganda work. She also delivers speeches in a number of industrial cities.
End of April-2 May	She goes to London and together with Clara Zetkin they are both actively involved in a mass campaign to win the vote for all those who have attained their majority. She also establishes contact with prominent members of the English workers' movement.
May	She returns to Berlin and resumes her propaganda tours of towns and villages in Germany.
Winter	She is elected to represent the management board of the trade union of men and women workers employed in the processing of fibrous materials in the Northern Industrial District of St Petersburg at the Eighth Congress of the Second International, and at the International Conference of Socialist Women.
	1910
26–27 August	She attends the International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen (Denmark), where she delivers a speech on the protection of mother and child and, together with Clara Zetkin, proposes that 8 March be celebrated annually as the International Day of Working Women. She is elected a member of the International Secretariat in charge of the women's socialist movement.
28 August–16 September	While in Copenhagen, she attends the Eighth International Congress of the Second International.
August–September	When the congress finishes, she speaks at meetings in Denmark and Sweden.

1911

February–March	In Bologna (Italy), she delivers lectures at the Menshevik party school on the Finnish question, the evolution of the family, and other issues.
Spring	She moves from Berlin to Paris, the centre of the Russian émigré community. Here there is a Bureau of Help for Political Émigrés, whose secretary is Georgi Chicherin (People's Commissar of Soviet Russia for Foreign Affairs in 1918–1930). She settles in Passy, just outside Paris, where she writes her book *A Journey Across Working-Class Europe*. On behalf of the Bureau of Help for Political Émigrés, Alexandra Kollontai tours the Russian colonies in France, Belgium, Germany and other countries, reading lectures. Funds thus raised go to the Bureau. She is actively involved in the work of the French Socialist Party.
August–September	She takes part in organising, in the south of France, a strike against rising prices by 'ménagères' (women workers and housewives whose husbands are workers), and delivers speeches in squares, restaurants and market-places.
3 December	She attends the funeral in Paris of Paul and Laura Lafargue and delivers a speech at the civil funeral service.

1912

February–March	She is twice invited by the Belgian Socialist Party to conduct propaganda work in Belgium, and while there she also delivers lectures at Russian colonies on the request of Chicherin. She helps the miners of the Belgium coal-mining centre in the Borinage district to prepare for a strike that lasted six weeks. Delivers 19 speeches at various large meetings during a period of 21 days.
Spring	On the invitation of the Swedish League of Socialist Youth and the left wing of the Swedish Social-Democratic Party, she goes to Sweden to address meetings up and down the country.
1 May	She speaks at a crowded meeting in Stockholm, at which she exposes the provocative policy being pursued by the militarists.
Summer	She arrives in Switzerland on the invitation of the left wing of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party and its leader, Fritz Platten, to deliver lectures on the woman's question.
September	She takes part in the trade union congress held in England and studies the role of women in the co-operative movement. She also visits the British Museum, where she collects material for her book *Society and Motherhood*.

24–25 November	She attends the congress of the Second International in Basle.
	Her book *A Journey Across Working-Class Europe* is published in Russian by the publishing house Znaniye (Knowledge), run by Maxim Gorky. In it the author outlines the life and struggle of the working class in Germany, England, Denmark and Sweden, based on observations made during her visits to these countries.
	1913
February	She is actively involved in organising the celebration of Women's Day in Russia, and helps to prepare for publication special issues of newspapers devoted to International Women's Day.
	The left wing of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party invites her to take part in preparations for and celebration of Women's Day.
Spring	She returns to Berlin, publishes the brochure *New Women* and a number of articles on the women's question.
Summer-autumn (up to mid-November)	She works in the British Museum, writing the book *Society and Motherhood.* She also reads lectures to women workers at 'Bebel House'.
Winter	She returns to Germany where, together with the writer E. Federn, she translates her book *A Journey Across Working-Class Europe* into German. The outbreak of war prevents its publication.
	1914
End of May	Kollontai is Russia's representative at a meeting of the Bureau of the International Women's Secretariat held to discuss the convening of an International Conference of Socialist Women in Vienna.
	In Berlin she assists in the organisation of a meeting of women workers against war and militarism. She is unable to deliver her speech at the meeting because of the arrival of the police, and it is read, under the pseudonym of Davidova, by another of the meeting's organisers.
21–31 July	At Kohlgrube (the Tyrol) she continues to prepare for the International Women's Conference at Vienna.
1 *August*	She arrives in Berlin from the Tyrol on the day war is declared.
3 *August*	She is arrested by the German authorities.
4 *August*	She is released on the insistence of Karl Liebknecht, a member of the Reichstag. She meets and talks with Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin and

	other German Social-Democrats on the issues of war, peace and revolution.
Mid-September	With the help of Karl Liebknecht, she and other Russian Social-Democrats leave Germany for Denmark, where she establishes contact with the Danish Social-Democratic Party and conducts propaganda work.
October	Sought by the Danish authorities, she leaves for Sweden, where she once more begins active anti-war activity.
End of October-beginning of November	She arrives in Stockholm and takes up residence in the Carlton Hotel on Birger Jarl Gatan. Here she meets, and holds discussions with left-wing Swedish Social-Democrats. She also delivers speeches and writes articles for the Swedish Social-Democratic press.
Mid-November	She is arrested on charges of conducting anti-militarist propaganda and constituting a threat to Swedish state security. From Stockholm transit prison she is sent to the Malmö fortress.
End of November	She is expelled from Sweden and moves to Denmark. From Copenhagen she writes to Lenin telling him the real reason for her arrest – her anti-war articles in the socialist press and her speeches at well-attended meetings.

1915

January	She is invited to attend as a guest the conference of socialists from neutral countries, held in Copenhagen. Here she meets and talks with socialist representatives from Sweden, Norway, Holland and Denmark, telling them about No. 33 of the newspaper *Sotsial-Demokrat*, which carried the manifesto on war written by Lenin on behalf of the Central Committee of the RSDLP.
Early February	On the invitation of the Norwegian Social-Democrats, she moves to Norway and takes up residence in a small village outside Oslo (Christiania) called Holmen Kollen. Here she establishes contact with the Central Committee of the RSDLP (B) and, on Lenin's instructions, begins energetic work among the left-wing elements of Scandinavian Social-Democracy.
	She arranges for the correspondence between Lenin and St Petersburg to be conducted via the Scandinavian countries.
8 March	She addresses a women's meeting in Norway, where she protests against war.
24 March	She sends a written declaration supporting Lenin's policy to the International Conference of Socialist Women in Berne (Switzerland).

1 May	She addresses a meeting at Christiania held to mark International Working Men's Day.
21-28 May	She attends the congress of the Norwegian Social-Democratic Party in Trondhjem. At her suggestion, the congress sends greetings to the Bolshevik deputies to the Fourth State Duma who have been sentenced to permanent exile in Siberia.
Summer	She begins collaboration on the magazine *Kommunist* and at Lenin's request, writes the brochure entitled *Who Needs the War?*
July-August	She prepares for the International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald and continues her extensive correspondence with Lenin, at whose request she translates into Norwegian and Swedish his draft declaration prepared for the conference. After discussing the declaration with Norwegian Social-Democrats, she sends it on to Lenin.
September	Publication of her brochure *Who Needs the War?*, edited by Lenin, and published in Switzerland by the Central Committee Foreign Bureau, and in Russia by the Central Committee of the RSDLP. The German section of the American Socialist Party invites her to visit the USA to deliver lectures against the war and to spread the Zimmerwald principles.
Between 8 and 13 September	Lenin writes to Kollontai requesting her to translate the book *Socialism and War* into English, to promote the spread in America of anti-war, internationalist literature, to establish contact with the left-wing League of Socialist Propaganda, to raise funds for the party, etc. (Cf. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, pp. 346-347).
8 October	She arrives in New York and begins her propaganda tour of America.
	1916
6 March	Alexandra Kollontai returns from America to Norway.
14 March-August	She writes a letter to Lenin and Krupskaya with a report on her trip to America, and also articles for the Russian and foreign press. She organises contact with Russia, arranges for the forwarding of illegal literature and attends to the painstaking details of underground work.
	Publication in St Petersburg of her book *Society and Motherhood*.
End of August	She makes her second trip to America, staying in Paterson, one of the centres of the silk-weaving industry.
September-December	She undertakes active political work in the American socialist movement and also continues to write.

1917

28 January	She returns to Norway from America.
28 February	She writes the propaganda brochure *Who Needs the Tsar and Is It Possible to Manage Without Him?*
1 March	She learns about the February bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia and sends a telegram to Lenin in Switzerland asking for directives for the Bolsheviks preparing to return to Russia from the Scandinavian countries.
3 March	She writes to Lenin on the need, in view of the revolution in Russia, to organise in Scandinavia a temporary bureau of co-operation with the Central Committee of the RSDLP empowered, should it be necessary, to speak in the name of the Central Committee.
	She addresses a meeting in Christiania organised by the League of Socialist Youth and the left-wing Zimmerwaldians and devoted to the revolution in Russia.
Shortly after 9 March	She receives from Lenin the first articles of *Letters from Afar* to be sent to the editorial board of *Pravda* in Petrograd.
18 March	She returns to Petrograd from Norway.
19 March	She hands Lenin's articles *Letters from Afar* over to the *Pravda* editorial board, and herself joins the newspaper staff.
21 March	*Pravda* publishes its first article by Alexandra Kollontai, entitled 'Women Workers and the Constituent Assembly'.
23 March	She attends the solemn funeral on the Field of Mars (Petrograd) for the victims of the revolution. *Pravda* publishes her article 'Our Memorial to the Fighters for Freedom'.
26–27 March	She delivers a speech at the Military Section of the Petrograd Committee of the RSDLP.
27 March	She is elected as a deputy to the Petrograd Soviet by the Bolshevik Military Organisation.
March	She is elected a member of the Petrograd Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and a member of the bureau of the Bolshevik faction within the Soviet.
3 April	She meets Lenin and Krupskaya at the Finlyandskaya Station in Petrograd on their return from Switzerland.
4 April	She takes part in the All-Russia Conference of Bolsheviks – delegates of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies – held at the Tavrichesky palace, and in the joint meeting of Bolshevik and Menshevik conference delegates at which Lenin reads his April Theses. Kollontai delivers a speech supporting the April Theses.

24–29 April	She attends the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP as a delegate representing the Petrograd organisation.
April	She makes speeches at factories and plants, in barracks and soldiers' clubs, at meetings attended by sailors from the Baltic fleet, on board cruisers and destroyers in the Baltic, and at meetings of women workers.
May	She joins the staff of the magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker).
15–18 June	Attends the Ninth Congress of the Social-Democratic Party of Finland as a representative of the Central Committee of the RSDLP, and calls upon the Finnish Social-Democrats to break with the Second International.
3–24 June	She takes part in the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' And Soldiers' Deputies, where she delivers speeches on the nationalities' question and on the issue of Finland.
21 June	Attends the first All-Russia Trade Union Conference at which she delivers a speech on involving women in the trade union movement.
	Organises a strike by 4 thousand laundresses in Petrograd.
End of June	Leaves for Stockholm (Sweden) to represent the Central Committee of the RSDLP at a conference of the Zimmerwald Union.
Beginning of July	She is arrested by the Kerensky government.
26July-3 August	At the Sixth Congress of the RSDLP she is elected a member of the Central Committee and honorary chairman of the congress, which sends greetings to her and to others then in prison.
21 August	At the request of Maxim Gorky and G. Krasin, Kollontai is released from jail on a bail of 5 thousand roubles and put under house arrest.
September	She takes a leading part in the creation of the Bureau for Work Among Women.
End of September-October	She heads the lead group for women workers on the party Central Committee discussing the convening of the first conference of women workers in Petrograd.
10 October	She takes part in the extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee of the RSDLP which passes the resolution on armed uprising.
11 October	She addresses the Petrograd Soviet in support of a decisive break with the Pre-Parliament and the transfer of all power to the Soviets.
22 October	On the Day of the Petrograd Soviet she speaks at factories, plants and in army units together with others who are among the best party speakers.

24 October	The newspaper *Pravda*, which continues to appear despite the ban imposed by the Provisional government, publishes Kollontai's article 'The Immediate Tasks of the Conference of Women Workers'.
The night of 24/25 October; (6/7 November, New Style)	She stays at Smolny, the headquarters of the uprising.
25 October (7 November)	Attends a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of working people's deputies.
25-26 October (7-8 November)	Attends the Second Congress of Soviets and becomes a member of the Council of People's Commissars (1st convocation) as People's Commissar for State Welfare.
5(18) November	Takes part in the first conference of the women Workers of Petrograd, where she delivers a speech on the protection of mother and child.
December	Publication of her brochures *The Working Mother* and *Women Workes and the Constituent Assembly.*
	1918
2 March	She is appointed by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee to lead its diplomatic mission to Sweden, England and France, in order to inform them of the situation in Russia.
6-8 March	Attends the Seventh Party Congress as a delegate of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and delivers a speech opposing the signing of the Brest Peace Treaty.
14-16 March	As a member of the presidium of the Soviet, she takes part in the Fourth Congress of Soviets. After the congress she resigns from her post as People's Commissar for State Welfare.
Spring-Summer	On a decision of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) she is sent to do propaganda work in the Volga region.
Autumn	On a decision of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), she leaves for the textile regions (Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Kineshma, and others) to conduct propaganda work among the women workers.
16–21 November	She is actively involved in the work of the First All-Russia Congress of Women Workers and Peasants, at which she delivers a speech entitled 'The Family and the Communist State'.
Winter	Works in Moscow as a member of the commission of the party Central Committee on work and propaganda among women. She also writes for such newspapers as *Pravda, Izvestia, Kommunar* and others.

	Publication of her books *The New Morality and the Working Class, The Family and the Communist State, The Woman Worker during the Year since the Revolution, International Conferences of Women Workers* (A summary of the Stuttgart and Copenhagen conferences).
	1919
2–6 March	She takes part in the First Congress of the Third International and introduces a resolution on the involvement of women workers in the communist movement.
8-23 March	Attends the Eighth Congress of the RCP(B) as a delegate from the CC RCP (B) central commission on work among women. She delivers a speech on work among women.
April	On a decision of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), she leaves for the Ukraine, where she conducts propaganda work on the front and among the Komsomol. Together with Konkordia Samoilova she organises women workers in Kharkov. She attends the All-Ukrainian Congress of Trade Unions in Kharkov as a delegate of the metal workers union.
May	Works in the Donbas, Bakhmut and Lugansk.
June	She is nominated chairman of the Political Administration of the Crimean Republic.
July-August	Works as the Ukrainian People's Commissar for Propaganda. In Kiev she writes the brochures *Do Not Be a Deserter, Be a Valiant Warrior, Women Workers and Peasants and the Front, How Women Workers Fight for Their Rights.*
31 August-September	After evacuation from Kiev as a result of General Denikin's advance, she returns to Moscow to the department of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) for work among women workers and peasants. She is appointed representative of the party Central Committee on the Central Committee of the Russian Communist League of Youth, and as representative of the women's department on the department on work in the countryside.
Autumn, 1919-Winter, 1920	She is appointed head of the women's department of the party Central Committee, and a member of the inter-departmental commission on the fight against prostitution under the People's Commissariat for Social Security.
	1920
22–29 December	She is elected a member of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee at the Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets.
	Publication of the brochure *International Women Workers' Day.*

1921

February-July She reads a course of lectures entitled 'Women and the Economic Evolution' and 'Communist Morality and Marital Relations' at the Sverdlov University in Moscow.

8–16 March She attends the Tenth Congress of the RCP(B), at which Lenin sharply criticises the representatives of various opposition groups, including the Workers' Opposition, one of whose leaders is Alexandra Kollontai. He also criticises her brochure published in preparation for the congress and entitled *What is the Workers' Opposition?*.

9-15 June She attends the Second International Conference of Women Communists, at which she delivers a speech on the forms and methods of work among women. She is elected as the deputy head of the International Women's Secretariat of the Communist International.

22 June-12 July Takes part in the Third Congress of the Comintern and speaks in defence of the policy platform of the Workers' Opposition. She also delivers a report on the work done by the communist parties among women. After the congress Kollontai, having regard for Lenin's criticism, reviews her anti-party position, rejects the idea of transferring the management of the economy to the All-Russia Congress of Producers, and breaks with the Workers' Opposition. From then on, Kollontai did not deviate from the general party line.

22-27 December At Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets she is elected a member of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the ninth convocation. Publication of her books *Women and the Economic Evolution* and *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia*.

1922

4 October She is appointed counsellor to the USSR plenipotentiary representation in Norway.

8 December She visits The Hague as a member of the delegation to the International Peace Congress convened by the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions.

1923

30 May She is appointed plenipotentiary representative and head of the Soviet diplomatic and trade mission in Norway, the first woman to occupy such posts.

1924

15 February An agreement on mutual recognition is signed between the USSR and Norway with Kollontai's active co-operation. Norway thus becomes one of

	the first Western European countries to accord the Soviet government *de jure* recognition.
9 August	She is appointed Soviet ambassador to Norway.
	1926
Spring	She signs a trade and navigation agreement between the USSR and Norway.
17 September	The USSR Central Executive Committee appoints her plenipotentiary and trade representative in Mexico.
	1927
4 June	She returns from Mexico to Moscow because of bad health.
October	She is once again appointed Soviet ambassador to Norway. Publication of her book *In a Kerensky Prison.*
	1930
Autumn	She is appointed Soviet minister in Sweden.
	1933
7 March	Alexandra Kollontai is awarded the Order of Lenin for her selfless service in the communist education of women workers and peasants.
June	She is instrumental in obtaining an agreement on the return to the USSR of gold reserves placed in Swedish banks by the Kerensky government.
	1935
20 May	She plays an active part in establishing the Swedish-Soviet society for cultural contacts, and is elected an honorary member of its management board.
9-22 September	She attends the XVI Assembly of the League of Nations as a member of the Soviet delegation; she works on the legal commission set up to investigate the legal and economic position of women.
	1936
20 September-1 October	She attends the XVII Assembly of the League of Nations as a member of the Soviet delegation.
	1937
12 September-12 October	She attends the XVIII Assembly of the League of Nations as a member of the Soviet delegation, and works on the legal commission.
	1940
January-March	She is involved in the preliminary work on the signing of an armistice during the war with Finland.

1942

4 April By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and on the occasion of her 70th birthday, Alexandra Kollontai is awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour for her outstanding services to the Soviet state.
She is appointed doyenne of the diplomatic corps in Sweden.

1943

16 September By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Alexandra Kollontai is raised to the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

1945

5 September She is awarded a second Order of the Red Banner of Labour for successfully fulfilling the tasks set by the Soviet government during the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945).

1946-1952

She does a great deal of work as adviser to the USSR Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

1952

9 March Alexandra Kollontai dies from a heart attack shortly before her eightieth birthday.